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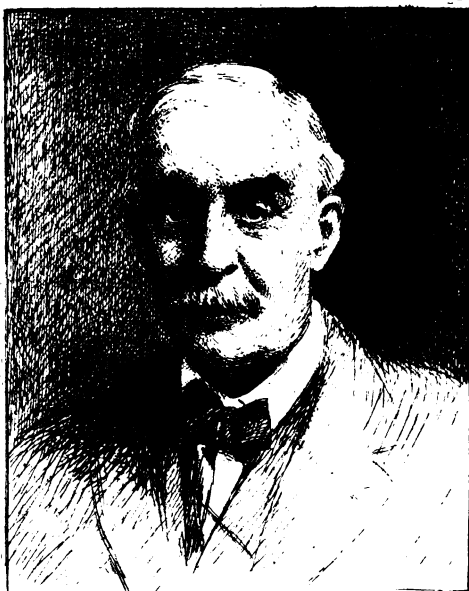
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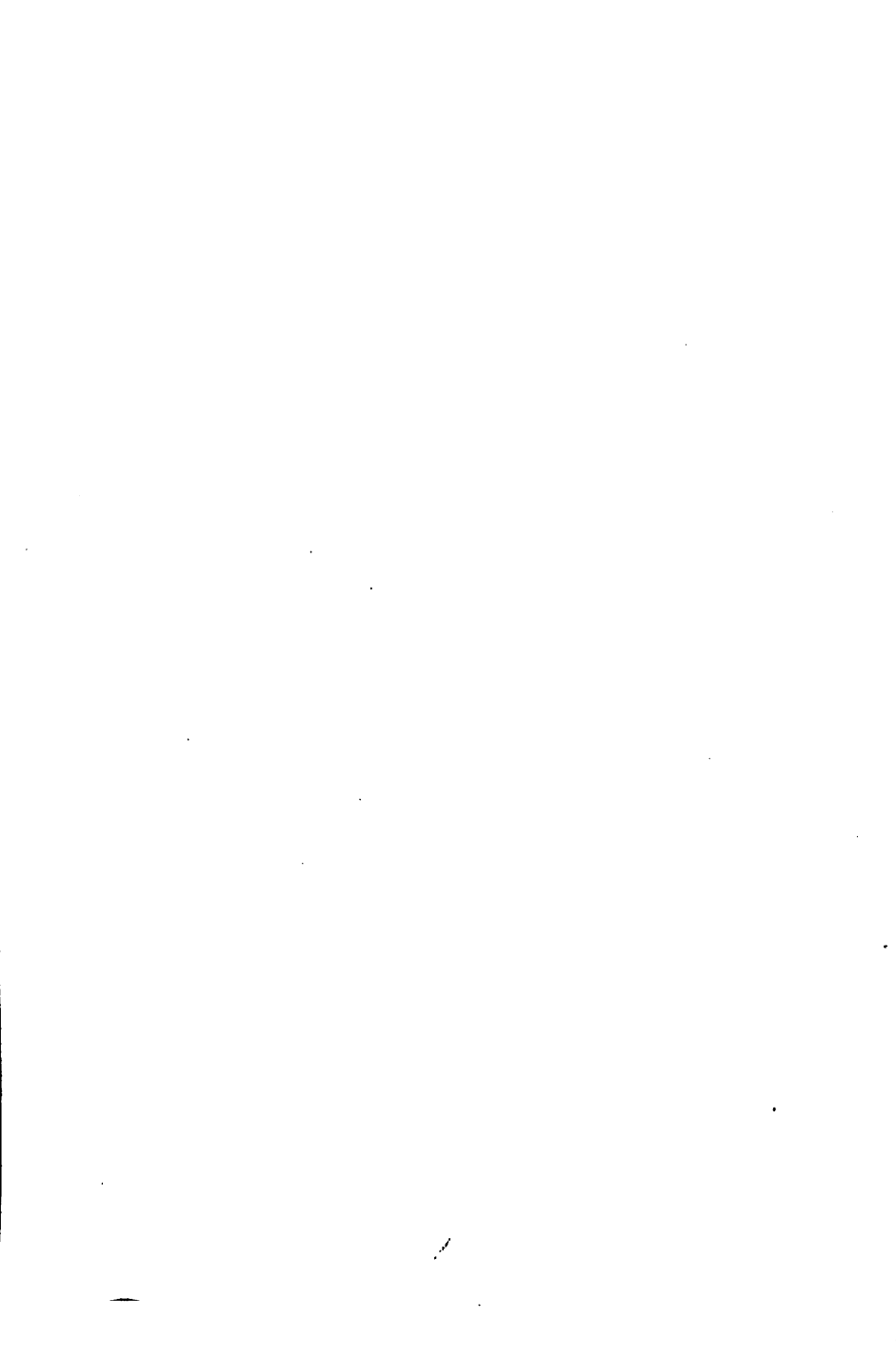
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THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF
CHRISTIAN DOGMA



THE
ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT
OF
CHRISTIAN DOGMA

AN ESSAY
IN THE SCIENCE OF HISTORY

BY
CHARLES A. H. TUTHILL



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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	I
I. THE FOUNDATION OF MONOTHEISM	4
II. THE MESSIANIC FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIANITY ...	33
III. THE CHRISTIANITY OF CHRIST	65
IV. JEWISH CHRISTIANITY	93
V. PAGAN CHRISTIANITY	112
VI. CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY ...	142
VII. THE PERMANENCE OF DOGMATIC RELIGION ...	160



THE
ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT
OF
CHRISTIAN DOGMA.

INTRODUCTION.

IF we compare Christianity with the other dogmatic religions of the world, we are at once struck by a feature peculiar to it, namely, the complexity of its doctrinal system. A glance at the Athanasian Creed is sufficient to show that this peculiarity results from the existence of fundamental inconsistencies in the dogmas of Christianity. Such inconsistencies are not found in other religions, whether, like Mohammedanism, they have at once sprung into full maturity at the time of their creation, or whether, like Judaism, they have passed through a long and slow process of development. The inconsistencies of Christian doctrine clearly cannot be ascribed to the necessary tendencies of

the evolution of dogmatic religion ; they must be due to special circumstances connected with the history of Christianity.

What these circumstances were there is no difficulty in ascertaining. The fully developed dogmatic system of Christianity is the product of the union of two opposite streams of religious tendency. From the collision of the monotheism of Judaism with the polytheism of Paganism the inconsistencies of its doctrines have sprung. In the doctrine of the Trinity, which takes up so much of the Athanasian Creed, we have the clearest evidence of this. But, in reality, the whole of Christianity is pervaded by the contradictions inseparable from the combination in it of the characteristics of monotheistic and polytheistic religion. This combination is the source of its unique power ; it thus can satisfy both the higher and the lower class of religious instincts ; but its complex and confused theology is also an inevitable result.

The distinctive feature of the doctrinal system of Christianity can thus be readily explained by a reference to the conditions of its origin. To investigate in detail, by the same method of historical inquiry, the causes which produced its separate dogmas, is the object of this essay. The origin of the earlier ones must be traced through the history of Judaism ; the later ones were Pagan,

but they were grafted on a Jewish stock. Starting from primary religious ideas, we have to examine the growth and modification of theological dogma. Our study, accordingly, will take us over the whole period of history.

CHAPTER I.

THE FOUNDATION OF MONOTHEISM.

AT the time of the birth of Christianity, only in one portion of the Roman world could a new and pure religion have arisen. The fusion of the empire had, by destroying their national basis, fatally weakened the Pagan religions ; so far as real feeling was concerned, they had passed into the hands of the ignorant classes exclusively, and had lost the vitality in which alone the higher religious forces can germinate. Philosophies, resting on a common basis of contempt of the popular polytheism, were the refuge of the more enlightened. Between philosophers and those who still believed in the power of the ancient gods there existed a vast mass of people who had religious instincts with no sure means of satisfying them, ripe subjects for the new religion which they looked for but could not originate. At this time, throughout the Pagan world, a high and systematic morality could only be reared on an intel-

lectual basis which destroyed sympathy with common men; in no part of it could have been developed the pure enthusiasm needed for the founding of a great religion.

One region of the empire alone was free from the symptoms of religious decay. In the small district of Palestine, with many offshoots scattered over the world, lived a people who professed a religion of the purest type. And this religion was not a lightly held philosophical theory; its adherents clung to it with a passionate tenacity, and were ever ready to face martyrdom in its defence. It was a pure monotheism, and morality was inculcated by it, indeed, maintained by it, in the strongest and most effective fashion. With justice Josephus could assert that Greek philosophers only followed the example of his countrymen, and taught doctrines which the Jewish sacred law had made practical realities.¹ For Judaism was not an esoteric creed which only the more cultured Jews fully understood; the lowest of the people grasped its principles, abhorred the idea of polytheism, detested even the smallest advance towards idolatry, and regarded every sin as a violation of divine decrees. Such a religion, pure and strongly held, was fit to be the parent of a noble religious system. In it originated the earliest doctrines of the religion which now sprang from it and con-

¹ Against Apion, ii. 40.

quered the Roman world. And as Judaism was in a special sense a national religion, its development must be examined in the history of the Jewish people.

We cannot, with any approach to historical certainty, assert more respecting the social and political condition of the first known ancestors of the Jews, than that they belonged to a race of nomad tribes wandering in the district which, roughly speaking, lies between Egypt and Palestine. In endeavouring to ascertain the religious ideas of this race, we may safely assume that the character of their religion was determined by the circumstances of their position. Living in a region which is either desert or barren and unprofitable land, the softer influences of nature could not affect them. The terror of nature would fascinate them ; lightning and tempest would speak to them of their gods, and from the harshness of their surroundings they would derive the gloomiest impressions of the powers of the supernatural world. Their religion would be essentially a religion of fear.¹ Having little to deify on the earth around them, their mythology would be based on the phenomena of the sky. Sun and moon and stars would be their divinities, and to these they would ascribe jealous and implacable tempers. This sternness

¹ See Kuenen's " Religion of Israel," i. 226 (Eng. trans.).

of their religion would carry with it many advantages. Their deities would be more majestic, more removed from themselves, than the gods of happier peoples, and the humility they would feel in worship would have within it the seeds of a higher religious development. A still more important feature of their mythology would be its narrowness. The poverty of their environment would cause their gods to be few and limited in number. No fresh divinities would discredit the older ones and reveal the weakness of their theology. And this would be likely to produce a serious effect on the outward form of their religion.

Whenever a common polytheism is professed by peoples politically separate, there is a tendency to localise deities. Now a large mythology throws great difficulties in the way of this tendency. If there are many gods, each one individually is too unimportant to be the divinity of a people, and the political divisions of course being few, after every tribe or state has appropriated a deity, a surplus is left with no particular duty to discharge. When this occurs, it usually results that the national deities are formed into a higher order of gods ; and probably divine oligarchies, like that of the Hellenic mythology, are always created in this manner. But it is obvious that if the number of gods is small at the time of the formation of political divisions, the process of localization is

greatly facilitated. The fewer they are, the more honour attaches to the gods individually; each one is sufficiently dignified to become the god of a separate people. After a system of this kind has been fully developed, the gods form a federal council, in which each state or tribe has a representative. The quarrels and rivalries of the earthly bodies are of course transferred to their heavenly representatives; all local patriotism expresses itself in the general religion.

From the evidence of the early records of the Jewish people we may conclude that the race from which they sprang went through a process of this character. In these, Israel, whether as a tribe or as a people, is often described as associating with other tribes or peoples, and comparing its own god with theirs, a common basis of religious belief being assumed.¹ The god of Israel seems to be regarded as superior to the other gods; but this does not imply that distinctions of rank were recognized in the common mythology. An intelligent Englishman would hardly assert that his country is now the chief European power; but if any other state were named as a possible enemy, he would probably say that his own was more than a match for it. In the same way, patriotism expressing itself in religion, the Israelites considered

¹ See Gen. xxxi. 53; Josh. xxiv. 15; Judges xi. 24; cf. Exod. xv. 11.

their own god, or heavenly representative, more than a match for any other, and this naturally involved a belief in his superiority. From these conditions a spurious monotheism would necessarily result. In proportion as their patriotism was strong, the Israelites would worship exclusively the tribal god, though thoroughly believing in the existence of others. This, of course, is only polytheism, but it contains within it the possibility of monotheistic development.

Such probably was the state of the religious ideas of the Israelites at the time they came into connection with Egypt. Previously they had been one among many cognate tribes having a common polytheistic mythology. In this mythology they had a tribal god, whom they worshipped without denying the existence of the rest. While mixing and constantly coming into collision with other tribes, each owning, of course, a similar deity, tribal patriotism must have made them, for the most part, devote themselves to this god exclusively. When they arrived in Egypt, they found there a system of religion utterly unlike their own, and this would confirm them in adherence to it. Being then a small tribe, they could more easily pay strict allegiance to the tribal god. As they increased in numbers, both through ordinary growth and through receiving accessions from cognate peoples outside, this allegiance would begin to be

endangered. While they were a small tribe often meeting with other tribes which had different gods, patriotism would make them cling to their own. But when they became a large tribe, and ceased to come in contact with other branches of their race, not only would tendencies towards polytheism in actual worship be strengthened, but the check upon them in the shape of tribal patriotism would be weakened. They would thus be likely to drift back into the racial polytheism, their tribal god being lost in the rest. The opposition to the Egyptian religion¹ would rather help this tendency, as it would throw them more on their feelings of race. So, on the whole, it is probable that the Israelites, during their connection with Egypt, became more or less ordinary polytheists.

In one respect, however, their relations with Egypt must have tended to maintain their adherence to the tribal god. The period of struggle against Egyptian power which preceded their departure from Egypt must, by stimulating their patriotism, have prevented the remembrance of his old rank from being wholly lost. Patriotism could not have been completely disassociated from the divinity who had formerly been the centre round which it rallied. The outburst of patriotic fervour necessarily accompanying the actual conflict with

¹ Ezekiel (xx. 8) says they were corrupted by the Egyptian religion, but this is very improbable.

Egypt, as well as its ultimate success, must have enormously increased the influence of the tribal god. For a time, we may be sure, he regained his original distinction, and became to the Israelites the representative of heaven. During the first serious fighting in Palestine, he would for the same reason retain his power. But then, as the national warfare degenerated into a series of detached tribal contests, the old tendency towards polytheistic worship would revive. To ascertain what forces counteracted this tendency, we must consider a new question.

Judaism may as well be said to have been founded by Moses as Christianity by Christ. Even if we knew nothing of its founder, there are features of Christianity which we could only explain by referring them to the influence of a personal character. There are peculiarities of Judaism, too, which have to be traced back to the personality of its founder. Moses and Christ, indeed, are inseparably connected in history. One completed what the other began. Without Moses, Christ could hardly have existed ; without Christ, the work of Moses would have been of little value to the world. This presumption from internal probability corroborates the traditional evidence, and justifies us in accepting its general outline.

If the Israelites migrated from Egypt under the leadership of Moses, and thus began their national

life, it was very natural that he should be to some extent their legislator as well. Their leader, under such circumstances, must have had great ability, and also enormous power. His ability, together with his power, would lead him to consolidate the energies of his people, in order to fit them for the difficult task lying before them; and this could only be done by a system of legislation. Accordingly, we may assume that the foundation of the Jewish law was laid by Moses, though it is very hard to ascertain what that foundation actually was. The ten commandments, in their simplest form, are generally admitted to be relics of the Mosaic age. To account for the first and most important of these we have, in particular, to call in the authority of Moses. "I am Jahveh thy god; thou shalt have none other gods beside me," is the foundation stone of the development of monotheism. It implies the existence of polytheism, but it decrees that polytheism shall be abolished. If the people, or any class of the people, continuously obeyed it, they had in time to become pure monotheists. If they ceased to think of other gods, these gods would ultimately pass out of remembrance, and Jahveh alone would occupy heaven. Jewish monotheism, with all its wonderful consequences, must be ascribed to the framer of the first commandment.

We have to assign its authorship to Moses,

because of the difficulty of otherwise accounting for it. That it was a spontaneous decree of the people, produced by their confidence in the national god after their victory over the Egyptians, is very improbable. Many reasons, however, can be given for its having been decreed by Moses. The explanation just mentioned is more probable when applied to him. He may, as Professor Kuenen conjectures,¹ have regarded the national success as a proof of the greatness of the national god, and so have vowed the people to his exclusive service. The connection between this hypothesis and the idea of a covenant between Jahveh and Israel, to be referred to presently, is in its favour. But a stronger reason for believing the commandment to be due to Moses might be found in his desire to secure the national unity. The Israelites had grown so numerous as to be divided into separate tribes. If the people had more gods than one, the old process would be repeated, each tribe choosing a different god for its tribal deity; and thus their religion would help the tendency towards disunion. We know how the unity of Greece was anything like a reality only when it was based on the worship of Apollo at Delphi, Apollo becoming practically the national god of the Hellenes.² If no rivals of Apollo had existed, how much more

¹ "Religion of Israel," i. 281 (Eng. trans.).

² See Curtius, "Hist. of Greece," bk. ii. ch. 4.

effective his worship would have been ! In general it may be said that, in an early stage of political development, national unity can be secured against tribal separation only by basing it on religion. A close union was specially necessary to the Israelites at this time, when they had to struggle against so many peoples in order to obtain a home. Recognizing the impossibility of otherwise securing this union, Moses may well have framed the first commandment in order to give the tribes at least one bond of union in the exclusive worship of Jahveh, their national god.

We may conclude, then, that from the Mosaic age it was part of the Israelitic religion that the tribal, or national, god should be worshipped exclusively. The people, whatever might be their practice, had accepted the principle. The second and third commandments, which prohibit idolatry and the misuse of Jahveh's name, are evidently meant to be supports of the first, by demanding reverence for Jahveh and by abolishing the records of his rivals. The next two are merely local. But the last five, the second table of the law, are the basis of a feature of the Jewish religion even more important than its monotheism.

That the morality of the time, so far as it existed, should have been based on religion is natural enough ; and, accordingly, at first sight, there seems to be nothing remarkable about the five moral

commandments. When examined closely they are found more curious. The first four, though simple rules which tribal experience might have shown to be necessary, are still exceptional as the laws of a half-civilized people. The last takes us into a region of morality with which it is impossible that the Israelites could then have been acquainted. Only a highly civilized mind could have conceived the precept, "Thou shalt not covet." Here again we are driven for explanation to the personality of Moses.

These commandments are inexplicable as the product of a low civilization, but they are very natural if a high civilization be assumed as their basis. Egypt was at this time highly civilized, and, as we know from the "Book of the Dead," had developed a pure morality, with which the last commandment would be thoroughly in harmony. If we could assume that Moses once belonged to the inner circle of Egyptian civilization, the peculiarities of Judaism would be fully explained. The early traditions represent him as brought up in the king's household, and, accordingly, in a position to be acquainted with the best philosophy of the age. A later tradition says he was "instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians."¹ And probabilities are distinctly in favour of this. The power and authority he exercised over the Israelites could be readily

¹ Acts vii. 22.

accounted for if he was a member of their tribe who had received the highest education of the time. Such a training must have developed his faculties, and marked him out as the leader of his countrymen, ensuring their reverence for him, and trust in his ability to rule them.

In a region of historical inquiry like that in which we are now moving, we must be content to be guided by conjecture. When a conjecture asserts what is intrinsically probable, and at the same time explains a complex series of phenomena, we may fairly consider it to be accurate. The conjecture that Moses drew his inspiration from the higher culture of Egypt is of this kind.¹ There was nothing strange in his stamping the principles of that culture, if he was acquainted with it, on his Israelitic legislation. He had an unequalled opportunity of realizing the ideals of conduct. Political circumstances had placed the destinies of his people in his hands. Commands coming from him had an authority only possible at the beginning of national life. It is thoroughly in accordance with probability that he should have seized the occasion offered him, and imposed laws on the nation he ruled which, unless they passed utterly out of remembrance, would ensure it a noble development.

¹ See an article by Professor Huxley, *Nineteenth Century*, April, 1886, p. 498.

From the evidence of the ten commandments it is thus almost certain that the Israelitic religion was, even at its beginning, peculiarly moral. The people were commanded to worship Jahveh exclusively, and also to practise a severe morality. From this connection between Jahvism and morality important consequences were bound to follow.

All ancient religions were more or less marked in practice by a sacrificial system. The idea at the bottom of the custom of offering sacrifices is very simple. Men, as a proof of their devotion, give to their gods some of their possessions. The immediate object may be either to win the divine favour or to avert the divine wrath. When a religion is harsh and severe, the latter is likely to be the more frequent sacrificial motive. Accordingly, when the Israelites sacrificed to Jahveh, it was probably for the most part to remove Jahveh's anger, to obtain forgiveness for their sins against him. Now exactly in proportion to the closeness of the connection between Jahvism and morality would be the tendency of these sins to be real sins. When sins are included among offences against a religious code, they are pretty sure to be the offences most frequently committed. Hence it follows that the early sacrificial system of the orthodox Israelites must have been largely directed to the atonement of sin.

If, then, we could accept the accounts in the

Pentateuch as an accurate description of the sacrificial customs of the Mosaic age,¹ with external evidence corroborating internal probability, we might regard our conclusion as proved. But, as Professor Kuenen has shown, the whole system of the Jewish ceremonial law described in the Pentateuch was, in at least its final and consolidated form, the result of the labours of the period of Ezra and Nehemiah. It thus becomes a question of great difficulty to determine what portion of the law, if any, existed in early times. A few statements of the prophets seem to imply that in the Mosaic age no sacrifices at all were offered to Jahveh.² But the prophets cannot be considered trustworthy authorities for the early history of Israel. They wrote under the pressure of immediate circumstances, and with a very definite purpose. This purpose, as will afterwards be shown, required them to cast discredit on sacrifices. In doing so, their repeated references are evidence that a full sacrificial system in connection with the worship of Jahveh was established in their time.³ Here their testimony is irrefragable, and it proves that such a system must have begun before their age. No period was so likely to have originated it as the earliest, when the foundations of the national life were laid.

¹ See, in particular, Lev. vi. 1-7. ² Jer. vii. 22; Amos v. 25.

³ Isa. i. 11; lxvi. 1-4; Hos. vi. 6; Micah vi. 6-8.

But the strongest argument in favour of the conclusion that sacrificing to Jahveh for the atonement of sin began in the Mosaic age is, that thus only can subsequent phenomena be explained. The great point in the history of Jewish religion is the magnificent period of the prophets. Their writings are the noblest expression ever given to religious and moral ideas. We explain their pure monotheism by deducing it from the institution of the first commandment, which necessitated in a class obeying it continuously the ultimate development of the belief that Jahveh was the one God "that made the earth and created man upon it, that stretched out the heavens and commanded all their host."¹ How can we explain their wonderful morality except in the same way? We know from the commandments that moral excellence was required by the religion of Jahveh from the very first. If thus from the beginning morality was impressed on Jahveh's worshippers by a sacrificial system which declared every sin to be an offence against him that must be expiated at a personal cost, we can understand how any class continuously adhering to him should in time have developed a morality in which sin was hated for its own sake, and goodness made the essence of religion. Such vivid and constant evidence of Jahveh's hatred of sin would naturally, after many generations, pro-

¹ Isa. xlv. 12.

duce the pure morality of the prophets. But otherwise it is inexplicable. A mere theoretical connection between Jahvism and morality might ultimately have made the Jahvists better than the worshippers of other gods, but it could not have created that marvellous passion for righteousness which made the Jewish religion at its best the greatest the world has ever seen. This conclusion does not involve the belief that in the Mosaic age the system of sacrificing for sin was fully developed. If the foundation of it was laid then, the conditions of the problem are satisfied. The system would ensure its own subsequent development. Once Jahveh's hatred of sin was marked by any practical effect, as time went on, through the moral growth of the people who grasped the doctrine, that hatred would seem to deepen, to become more comprehensive and complete. A conclusion which explains so much, and has probability so greatly in its favour, may fairly be accepted.

If from the age of Moses the religion of Jahveh was thus inseparably connected with morality, all the best of the people would rally round it. Unless Israel at any time was wholly without a remnant that loved righteousness and hated iniquity, Jahvism must always have had its earnest supporters. The same cause, of course, would tend to make it unpopular with the mass of the people.

But for this, it would be difficult to understand why the Israelites, down to the captivity, were so persistent in their devotion to strange gods. Jahveh was their national divinity, and a mere love of polytheism could hardly account for this incessant desertion of him. The close connection between Jahvism and morality fully explains the phenomenon. The Israelites in general found Jahveh too severe for them, and turned to gods more tolerant of evil-doing, just as Catholic sovereigns used to choose indulgent confessors. This fact would only confirm the few more strongly in their allegiance. The worshipper of Jahveh would justly extol Jahveh in comparison with Baal, as he compared himself with the worshipper of Baal. And thus through the purity of Jahveh's adherents their religion would be saved from the contamination of baser elements, and would necessarily develop in simplicity and truth. Sin, at first hated chiefly because Jahveh forbade it, would at last be hated because of its own foulness ; Jahveh, at first revered merely as the national saviour, would at last be revered as the lord of heaven and earth. Down the channel of Jahvism flowed all the higher forces of the national life, till at length they broke forth in the wave of moral and religious energy which finally overcame resistance in the grand struggle of the prophets.

Though the majority of the people usually

worshipped other gods, and thus broke their own sacred laws, we are not to suppose that they denied Jahveh's existence, or even his right to worship. They must have been pure polytheists, believing that many gods reigned in the heavens. Among these they held it to be their right to choose, just as a lower-class Catholic will choose his favourite saint. But they fully admitted that Jahveh was the national god ; and in periods of danger, when patriotism was strongly excited, it is likely that for the moment they returned to the exclusive worship of him. Thus the power of Jahvism over the people at large would rise and fall with the national fortunes. When Israel was prosperous, Jahvism prospered too ; when Israel declined, Jahvism declined as well. For we may well believe that the Israelites flourished just in proportion as they were united. The book of Judges is probably in the main historically correct. The tribes would drift apart, or even quarrel with each other, and their enemies would overcome them and take their cities. Then a wave of patriotism would sweep over them ; they would reunite and become victorious in their turn. From this it is easy to see what credit Jahveh would in time acquire, even among the entire people. Union brought with it national happiness and success, but the adoption of Jahvism was the condition of union. So it would appear to them that by re-

turning to Jahveh and observing the precepts of their sacred law they could always secure prosperity. When serving Jahveh faithfully, they would have good fortune ; after falling away from him, they would quickly be plunged in calamity. How soon this would create a conviction of Jahveh's irresistible power ! In their misfortunes they would see Jahveh punishing them for their apostacy ; in their successes they would see Jahveh accepting their repentance and restoring his protection.

Thus in time all the people would in one sense become Jahvists. They would believe that Jahveh was their true god, and that they ought to worship him alone. When they turned to other gods, they would do so with a distinct consciousness of evil-doing and a certain expectation of punishment. Jahveh's severity of moral requirement would render it impossible for them to serve him willingly ; they could never become true Jahvists. But in their hearts would always be a sullen fear of Jahveh, a belief that he punished terribly. This was the chord of popular feeling which the prophets touched, and to the existence of which they owed their success.

These conditions would naturally in time produce the belief that a covenant had been concluded at the beginning between Israel and Jahveh. The true Jahvists would of course eagerly proclaim

that Israel's happiness depended on obedience to Jahveh, that calamity was the result of his just anger, and prosperity the consequence of his favour. But that Jahveh should have given notice of this, and shown the ways of good and evil from the first, would soon seem to be necessary. Hence in later times it would be thought that Jahveh had formally concluded a covenant with the Israelites, in which he engaged to protect them and make them prosperous, on condition that they served him and kept his law.¹ All the failures and misfortunes of the nation would be ascribed by the Jahvists to the breaking of this covenant by the people, and the consequent drawing down of the penalties of its violation on their heads.

From the development in Jahvism of this idea that suffering was a divine punishment followed the most important results. If national suffering was considered to be due to national breaking of the law, equally private suffering would be ascribed to private breaking of the law. Sin would be looked on as the cause of suffering. Abstinence from sin was commanded by Jahveh, and so every sin would be a violation of his commands that invited punishment by him. Private suffering would then be regarded as the proof of sin, as Job's friends regarded it, and as the divine chastise-

¹ Exod. xix. 5, 6 ; Lev. xxvi. For correlative covenant, see Gen. xxviii. 20, 21.

ment of it. But of course it would seem right that the chastisement should be proportioned to the sin, and limited for each offence. Thus, in time, suffering would be considered the atonement of sin, Jahveh's punishment of it, after which his favour would be restored. But sacrifices, as we saw before, were the legal means of atoning for sin. If a man sinned, then, in order to escape the suffering which otherwise would be the penalty of his sin, he would offer a sacrifice. Now Israelitic sacrifices, as they were a pastoral people, were mainly offerings of living beasts. Under these circumstances there would certainly be a tendency to imagine that the penalty of sin was laid on the sacrificial victim, that its suffering and death were accepted as the atonement in place of the suffering of the offender.

Professor Kuenen, basing his opinion on the fact that no direct mention of it occurs in the law, believes that this idea of atonement by vicarious suffering did not enter into the Jewish sacrificial system.¹ The legal permission in certain cases of a sin offering of meal or flour² supports his conclusion. On the other hand, vicarious punishment was clearly recognized in one great ceremony of the law. The scapegoat is described as bearing away the sins of the people into the wilderness in which it was left to die.³ With a tendency of the sacri-

¹ "Religion of Israel," ii. 267 (Eng. trans.).

² Lev. v. 11, 12.

³ Ibid. xvi. 21, 22.

ficial system towards the belief in vicarious punishment, and clear evidence in one instance of its recognition, we may safely assume that it entered to some extent into the feelings of the people when they sacrificed. Probably it was never consciously developed in the law, and so it was not directly mentioned, and, in exceptional cases, inanimate offerings were allowed. But after the sacrificial system had been long in existence, the constant repetition of animal sacrifices would naturally produce the belief. We find the principle of vicarious punishment asserted in the prophets, and fully developed in the sending away of the scapegoat. We may safely conclude, then, that, from the beginning, it was latent in Jahvism, and gradually grew as Jahvism passed into Judaism, until at length it reached maturity in the first great dogma of Christianity.

Such a principle, growing in Jahvism, would tend still more to develop a hatred of sin. Morality exists because, from the simple observation of social phenomena, sin is connected with suffering, and calamity of some kind regarded as its inevitable consequence. But this connection of sin with suffering would be placed far more vividly before the worshipper of Jahveh, as his religion gradually forced on him the belief that "without shedding of blood there is no remission."¹ In the blood of

¹ Heb. ix. 22.

the victim sprinkled on Jahveh's altar, the Israelite would see stern evidence of the inexorable severity of Jahveh against sin—a severity so great that he could not forgive it without exacting the penalty, though his mercy might allow the transgressor to find a substitute. Harsh and cruel Jahvism thus would be, even rooted in injustice ; but in effect it would be grandly moral, stamped with a condemnation of sin that, at such a stage of civilization, was of priceless value.

From the Mosaic age, then, on to the period of the prophets, we can imagine the development of Jahvism in Israel. There was always the nucleus of true Jahvists, who observed the law so far as it existed, and steadily grew in spirituality and moral insight. They were the national party ; for them tribal divisions could have had but little importance. From among them, in times when the national fortunes were near ruin, always uprose the deliverers, as the pure flame of their patriotism drew to them the nobler elements of the people. They, in fact, were Israel, a continuous power representing the national life. Through a long struggle, marked by many a martyrdom, they contended against the downward tendencies of the rest of the people, until at length, after the final destruction of Israel's material greatness, they won the victory and impressed their principles on the entire nation. It was no mere sense of the superi-

ority of Jahvism that sustained them for the longest part of this contest. That could only be felt strongly towards the end, when the chief fruit of the struggle had been gained. Their fierce patriotism was their real strength. To them Jahveh seemed to be King of Israel, and his law the constitution of their state. In idea their government was a theocracy; even an earthly viceroy impaired Jahveh's prerogatives.¹ This was possible because Jahveh was the national god, universally recognized as such. As the national god, the worship of him was patriotism; he was the ideal object of Israel's self-love. All their religious feelings flowed in a patriotic channel. Church and state were blended in one; love of their country inspired their passionate devotion to their religion. This close union of religious and national feeling afterwards continued with the relations inverted, patriotic feeling flowing in a religious channel.

In connection with its intense patriotism, Jahvism from the beginning must have been distinguished by a rigid exclusiveness. The greatest danger it had to face was the corruption of the Israelites by the religions of the peoples around them. To guard against this danger, it would naturally insist on the sternest separation of Israel from the Gentile nations. Circumcision, as well as other local customs, it used as means of fulfilling its

¹ 1 Sam. viii. 7.

purpose. Jahvism was probably at first fiercely cruel. The injunctions to extirpate the Canaanites contained in the books of the law, which Professor Kuenen considers to be the expression of the Jewish hatred of foreigners after the captivity, and only "murder on paper," in all likelihood faithfully represent the feelings of the Jahvists in early times. They must have seen their fellow Israelites constantly deserting Jahveh for the gods of other peoples, and it is natural that they should have wished to remove such temptations in the most effective manner. Probably they did not succeed in gratifying their desires, except in a few instances when national feeling was strongly roused. The Israelites in general, we may be sure, were easily corrupted, and were in too much sympathy with foreign gods to destroy their worshippers. But the Jahvists must have been fierce haters of foreigners, and eager in every way to build an insurmountable wall around Israel. This strict exclusiveness, inevitable and, indeed, praiseworthy in early times, afterwards came into collision with the higher tendencies of Jahvism when it attained its maturity. The subsequent Messianic ideal, as it existed in the noblest minds, involved a struggle against these influences, which, in its youth, had been a hard shell enclosing and protecting the Jewish religion.

For the most part the battles of Jahvism must

have been with the local religions of the lands the Israelites conquered.¹ Intermixing with the conquered peoples, in race kindred to themselves, they would readily adopt the divinities they found in possession of the soil. Thus, in different districts, Jahvism was opposed to different religions²—a fact which was afterwards the subject of the bitter irony of Jeremiah.³ But its longest and most important conflict was with the religion of Baal, some particular deity worshipped under this generic title. The history of Elijah illustrates the severity and uncertainty of the struggle. To the Jahvists probably its fierceness was wholly due. They would tolerate the existence of no other religion, and so, in self-defence, other religions were bound to persecute them. This long contest with Baal must have been of great service to Jahvism.⁴ It strengthened the fanaticism of the Jahvists, and showed vividly to the people the zeal their religion inspired. When actually put face to face with other gods, the superiority of Jahveh must have been so manifest as to gain for him many adherents.

During the early history of Israel, up to the time of the kings, in spite of occasional interruptions, the national fortunes were prosperous, and the territory of the Israelites increased in extent.

¹ Josh. xxiv. 15.

² Judg. x. 6.

³ Jer. ii. 28.

⁴ See Kuenen, "Religion of Israel," i. 360 (Eng. trans.).

Jahvism, as the national religion, would naturally share in the prosperity of the state. In the golden age of Israel, the age of David and Solomon, it must have had great nominal power. The large Israelitish empire which then existed must have appeared convincing proof that the national deity had kept his part of the covenant, and so the people would be more disposed to abide by theirs. But Jahvism could not have really sunk into the hearts of the Israelites ; their devotion to it was strong in the sunshine, but failed in the storm. When the kingdom was split in two, and the fortunes of the Israelites steadily declined, and great empires, in comparison with which, even united, they were as nothing, overshadowed them, then Jahvism seemed threatened with utter ruin. Only the devotion of its true adherents, whom the days of its success had enabled to develop in appreciation of its value, saved it from destruction.

Still, even during the closing struggle, Jahvism must have included in its ranks a large proportion of the people. The language of the prophets is clear evidence of this. The strong phrase, "I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts,"¹ which Isaiah puts in the mouth of Jahveh, is a proof that many sacrifices were then being offered to him. Signs of only a formal adherence they probably were ; and it was not

¹ Isa. i. 11.

merely to extend the nominal limits of their religion, but to change this formal adherence into a real grasp of its principles, that the prophets fought their battle and won Israel for Jahveh.

CHAPTER II.

THE MESSIANIC FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY the time of the prophets Jahvism had grown into Judaism. Their religion, with the examination of which we shall be mainly occupied in this chapter, in all cases was a pure monotheism ; they worshipped Jahveh as God, sole maker and ruler of heaven and earth. It was Judaism, too, in the sense that it was universally recognized as the national religion. That Jahveh was properly the god of Israel was now admitted by all. And this the prophets unhesitatingly assumed. They did not regard themselves as preachers of a religion who sought to persuade others of its truth ; they were rather, in their own eyes, champions of loyalty against rebels and traitors false to their parent Israel. For while they believed that Jahveh was God, the creator of all the world, he was still much more to them the god of Israel "his servant, the seed of Abraham his friend."¹ Patriotism was the

¹ Isa. xli. 8.

essence of their religion. Even when the later prophets reached their highest exaltation in dreaming of the return of all men to the knowledge of God, they were thinking of the welfare of the Gentiles far less than of the glory of Israel. And this, too, inspired their passionate hatred of sin. They hated it not merely for its own sake, but as an act of civil revolt against Jahveh, which called down his vengeance on their country. As Jahveh was head of the state, sin was a political offence, and they condemned it accordingly with the fervour of condemnation so rare in moral, so common in political questions. The grand poetry of denunciation with which they enriched the literature of the world sprang from local feeling based on local requirements.

Previous to this period no prophetic writings are found. And yet there must have been prophets of Jahveh before ; indeed, many such are mentioned in the Jewish historical books. Evidently prophetic activity was less needed before. Jahvism had prospered with the prosperity of the nation ; but when the national fortunes declined, and the great Assyrian empire threatened Judæa, it began to lose its hold on the people. To save itself, it rallied all its strength, and the splendid period of prophetic energy, which has handed down to us so many noble works, was the result. The prophets saved Judaism. We owe to them an inestimable

debt of gratitude, for they were the channel through which flowed the higher religious forces of the world: It was well that the crisis came no earlier, or perhaps their religion would not have been sufficiently developed to call forth such magnificent powers in its defence.

Intensely patriotic as the prophets were, the chief object that engaged their attention was the depression of Israel's fortunes. However weak the allegiance of the Israelites in general to him had been, still they were Jahveh's people, his representatives on earth.¹ In spite of much back-sliding, he had given them prosperity, and under the first kings had made them a powerful nation. In their own time, on the other hand, the early prophets saw Israel divided and weak, and threatened with utter destruction; and the later prophets saw this destruction fall on one kingdom after the other, until the national existence ceased. Believing that all events were under the control of Jahveh, and that he had made the covenant with Israel mentioned in the last chapter, they could accept only one explanation of their country's calamities. They could not imagine Jahveh false to his promise, and so the alternatives would be presented to them as the second Isaiah puts them before his countrymen: "Behold, Jahveh's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his

¹ See Exod. xix. 5, 6.

ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear."¹ This is the burden of all the preaching of the prophets. They were ever saying to their countrymen, "You have broken your covenant; you have deserted Jahveh; and now he has deserted you."² The almost invariable image under which they describe Israel is that of an adulterous woman who has forsaken her husband. By their violation of the covenant, the Israelites had provoked Jahveh's wrath, and all their misfortunes were sent as a punishment by him.³

Compelled professionally thus to believe that Israel had been false to Jahveh, the prophets were not good judges of the actual extent of this falsehood. They denounced the wickedness of the people, not so much because they saw it as because they felt it must be there as the explanation of Jahveh's harshness. Hence it is very likely that their reports of the evil doings of their countrymen are exaggerated. If we did not know from internal

¹ Isa. lix. 1, 2.

² See Isa. xlvi. 18, 19.

³ For an endeavour to secure future obedience to the covenant, see 2 Kings xi. 17. From this idea that all Israel's calamities were due to the violation of a divine covenant, probably arose the Jewish explanation of the "origin of evil." Calamities in general falling on mankind they would naturally ascribe to the same cause, namely, the disregard of the commands of God. Hence the story of the fall of man as we have it in the opening chapters of Genesis.

probability that the religion of Jahveh was then in danger, we might suspect that the prophets were fighting imaginary foes. Knowing, however, that they must have had great forces opposed to them, we can allow for the exaggeration, and yet admit the general truth of their statements.

The people they addressed could hardly have been in a position to defend themselves against the strictures of the prophets by even to this extent taking exception to their denunciations. With the decline of Israel, Jahvism had also declined, and the Israelites must have felt instinctively that the second phenomenon was the cause of the first, and that their own exceptional sinfulness had produced the national disasters. They might, indeed, so far as they knew the past history of their country, complain that the people of Israel had before transgressed as heavily without receiving such a severe punishment from Jahveh. But here the prophets met them fully on their own ground, by denouncing their past as well as their present wickedness, and by asserting that, his long-suffering patience having at length given way, Jahveh was then punishing them for the whole course of their national sins. Only once in the prophetic books is there any sign that the people ever ventured to question the premisses of the prophets. On one occasion they are said to have replied to Jeremiah's denunciations by asserting that their misfortunes

were really due to their having forsaken other gods for Jahveh, and by announcing that they would return to these divinities, the worship of whom had been accompanied by prosperity.¹ It was a dangerously strong argument to use against the prophets, and it naturally stirred Jeremiah to a fiercer fury of malediction. But, in general, the people could not have had either the critical power or the knowledge of their own history needed for the adoption of such a line of defence. The steady darkening of Israel's prospects must have seemed to them grim confirmation of the prophetic statements. As prophet after prophet arose screaming against their wickedness, pointing to their misfortunes as the punishment inflicted by Jahveh, and announcing that worse calamities would come before the completion of it, they must have seen in every national disaster a proof that the prophets were divine envoys, and a chill of fear must have driven them to Jahveh's feet.

Prophets and people stood on common ground in their patriotism. The attention of all the Israelites must have been absorbed in watching the national prospects. The prophets, necessarily including in their number the best and wisest minds, of course saw more clearly than the rest. Probably most of them had the acuteness to see how inevitable was the destruction of Israel. Once

¹ Jer. xliv. 15-19.

the group of small kingdoms fringing the eastern side of the Mediterranean was threatened by the vast power of inland Asia, it was not difficult to foresee the ultimate issue. Still the prophets, in their own way, did their best to avert their country's ruin. Every prophetic declaration was a political pamphlet giving political advice. All their counsel was simply the development of a single precept—Rely on Jahveh only. In home matters this principle of action could do no harm, but it had a bad effect on foreign policy. When the great Assyrian empire was overshadowing Israel and all the kingdoms around, it did not require much wisdom to perceive the advantage of an alliance against the common danger. Nevertheless, the whole prophetic influence was used to prevent it; the states were separately attacked, and perished one by one. Egypt was far the most powerful of the countries near Palestine opposed to Assyria, and its protection would have been of enormous value to Israel. And yet at a time when both were threatened, Isaiah thundered against an alliance with Egypt;¹ and probably prophetic advice was the cause of the almost inconceivable folly of the religious Josiah's attack on an Egyptian army actually invading Assyria.² So far as the prophets thus contributed to the political overthrow of Israel, they served the higher interests

¹ Isa. xxx., xxxi.

² 2 Kings xxiii. 29.

of their religion ; but evidently a foolish fanaticism dictated their action, a belief that Jahveh would be dishonoured if his people allied themselves with strangers, and that, if they trusted to him alone, he would finally deliver them from their enemies.

As the national ruin of the surviving kingdom of Israel drew nearer, the prophets had to fight more fiercely on behalf of their religion. The people must have been as angry with Jahveh as he was said to be with them. The prophets met their anger with more savage denunciations of their wickedness, and more severe predictions of calamity. The division between prophets and people became then most strongly marked, and the struggle between them resembled a civil war. The life of Jeremiah, the most national of all the prophets, was one long battle. The evil doings of his countrymen he held to be the cause of all Israel's misfortunes, and he hated them with a bitter hatred. This hatred they fully reciprocated ; he was imprisoned and almost put to death. When the chief prophet of the religion of Jahveh received such treatment at the hands of the people, the religion itself must have been in terrible danger. If this period had been prolonged, perhaps Judaism would have preceded the kingdom of Judah in its fall.

But the destruction of the national polity of

Israel came in time to save the national religion. When Judæa was merely a province of a great empire, the nationality of the Jews could survive only in the religion of which Jahveh was the head. The very manner in which the change took place was exceptionally favourable to Judaism. The captivity, the carrying away of the best families of the Jews into an inland district of the empire, was admirably calculated to destroy Jahveh's rivals. The nucleus of the nation, placed in such close contact with foreign religions, by patriotism alone would have been made sincere worshippers of Jahveh. Far away from the local idolatries of Judæa, the exiles accepted the pure religion of the prophets. The most imaginative and the most spiritual of the greater prophets, Ezekiel and the second Isaiah, sprang from their ranks. And thus at last the prophetic became the popular religion, and Jahveh as God reigned over Israel. When the exiles returned to Judæa, they carried with them a pure and moral monotheism. The remainder of the people readily adopted their principles. Judaism from this time was the sole religion of the Jews, the expression of their national patriotism. Consolidated now finally into the rigid system of the law, with a multitude of minute observances that kept it constantly before their eyes, it was placed beyond reach of attack. Henceforth all Jahveh's people wor-

shipped Jahveh only, professed obedience to his precepts, and knew him as the one true God.¹

Thus, in outward semblance, the prophets won their battle. They won it in consequence of the events they most bitterly deplored. With their religion the only security of their nationality, the Jews never afterwards wavered in their allegiance to it. Persecution made them cling to it more firmly; it inspired them in the noblest period of their history, the crisis which produced the Maccabees. Even when an empire greater than the Chaldean conquered them, and a severer sentence exiled them from Judæa, dispersed over the world, they held to their religion. The moral monotheism which Jahvism had developed was now unalterably settled. New doctrines were added to it, some of which became of the first importance, but its primary principles were fixed for ever. And yet, at the very moment at which Judaism was thus established, there was sown the seed of a new religion, destined ultimately to spring from it in defiance of its spirit of privilege. The nobler prophets sought to make their religion the national glory of Israel, a blessing to be taken by all the world meekly from Israel's hands; and their efforts long afterwards produced a religion which ignored

¹ For the influence of the captivity on Judaism, see Ewald, "Hist. of Israel," v. 24, *seq.* (Eng. trans.), and Kuenen, "Religion of Israel," ii. 139 (Eng. trans.).

national distinctions. For at the time of the full development of Judaism the movement towards Christianity began.

The expectation of a Messiah was the most peculiar feature of the Jewish religion. It was a fundamental principle of the community of Israel, says Ewald, "that every real divine deliverance could be attained only by the instrumentality of a true prophet."¹ The cause of this reliance on divine envoys was probably the rigid theocratic character of their Jahvist constitution, which discouraged general enterprise. The belief that a covenant had been originally concluded with Jahveh tended to produce dependence on him; his worshippers looked for help to him, and not to themselves. Any great man who felt himself impelled to lead the people in times of national peril, was sure to consider himself Jahveh's representative, commissioned by him for the purpose; and, of course, all Jahvists would naturally be of the same opinion. In time this reliance on individuals became fixed, and gave the Messianic colour to the national hopes.

The hopes themselves were encouraged by the want of enterprise which invested them with their personal character. Hope is but a form of dreaming, and the worst men of action are the best

¹ "History of Israel," ii. 35 (Eng. trans.).

dreamers. Jews who believed in the power of Jahveh were naturally hopeful. As the national fortunes sank lower and lower during the prophetic period, it was impossible for such a people not to expect an ultimate restoration of Israel's greatness. The prophets, in particular, were impelled in this direction. Being men of imagination rather than action, whose intense patriotism was blended indissolubly with trust in Jahveh, they were strongly urged to hope for Messianic deliverance. Israel, after all, was Jahveh's people, and Jahveh could never forsake his people, or allow them to be utterly destroyed. For their sins they were being punished, but the punishment could not last for ever. Jeremiah even expostulates with Jahveh for permitting his people to be so degraded, and "the vanities of the Gentiles" to seem superior to him.¹ Sooner or later Jahveh would assert his power, and vindicate his glory as ruler of the world. Though the prophets might predict immediate misfortunes, they all believed that ultimately the deliverer would be sent to Israel.

In the dreams of the prophets, the work to be accomplished by this inspired envoy of Jahveh had important variations. The first and most natural character he assumed was that of a king and conqueror, who should lead Israel to victory and restore the national empire. To the Israelites of

¹ Jer. xiv. 19-22.

the prophetic age who looked back on the history of their country, the period of David's reign seemed the brightest it had known. Israel had then been united, internally at peace, and lord of the peoples around. These blessings were believed to have been obtained specially by the skill and power of David himself; and so, by a familiar process of thought, the Messiah became a second David, coming to do the work of the first by reviving the old prosperity.¹ With the earlier prophets this was almost the sole kind of Messianic dream. When the punishment of Israel should be complete, the Messiah was to come as a prince and warrior, and make the nation greater than it ever had previously been.²

After the overthrow of the northern kingdom, this national Messianic ideal naturally included the restoration of its scattered captives to their native land. The Samaritan captivity seemed to the prophets to be designed by Jahveh as a destruction of the fatal system of dualism which had undermined Israel's strength. Henceforth the Israelites were to be one people, with Jerusalem as their centre and capital. When the kingdom of Judah, too, was conquered, and its chief classes also carried away into captivity, of course the restoration of

¹ See Ezekiel xxxvii. 24, 25; and cf. Micah v. 2-9. Bethlehem, as David's birthplace, was to be the birthplace of David the Messiah.

² *Ibid.*

exiles became the most important part of the Messiah's mission. But even before this, the prophets of Judah, warned by the fate of Samaria, and aware of the customs of the Assyrian and Chaldean empires, foresaw and predicted the great captivity, and, in consequence, included a subsequent restoration in their Messianic dreams. Thus by nearly all the prophets the restoration of the captives to their country was regarded as the prelude to the events of the Messianic period, either to be accomplished by the Messiah personally, or to be immediately followed by his appearance. In so confidently predicting the restoration, the prophets were only giving expression to the national hopefulness, but they might have based their expectation on stronger grounds. The cohesive influence of their religion was sure to prevent the Jewish exiles from being lost in the peoples among whom they were placed ; and if they managed to preserve their nationality, it was likely that, sooner or later, they would be restored to Judæa. The absence of this influence was probably the reason why no restoration followed the captivity of the kingdom of Samaria. The religion of Jahveh was never so strong in it as in the kingdom of Judah, and must have been then too weak to serve as a national support. When the second captivity occurred, Judaism was able to meet it and to save the nationality it was designed to destroy.

After the restoration had taken place, fulfilling the predictions of the prophets under circumstances very different from those which they had expected, the Messianic ideal had, of course, to be disconnected from it. Sufficient ground still existed for looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. Israel was only semi-independent, a small state at the mercy of Gentile masters. But the disappointment of the Messianic expectations which had been connected with the restoration must have given a blow to the spirit of prediction. During the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the voices of the prophets grew faint and feeble; and after the restoration was complete, only one broke the silence. The Jews had to fall back on faith in the ultimate fulfilment of earlier prophecies, regarding the establishment of Judaism as the religion of all Israel, as the beginning of the reconciliation of Jahveh and his people which should finally secure their prosperity.

So far as the Messianic ideal of the prophets took this national form, it greatly helped to effect their union with the people. All the people were thoroughly at one with them in wishing for the national glory of Israel. If, by proclaiming Jahveh's anger and predicting misfortunes, they excited popular displeasure and dislike, equally, by promising his favour and predicting prosperity, they excited popular feelings of pleasure and good-will. In fact,

this part of their preaching sugared the pill of their denunciations, and probably had a large share in giving them their final success. As the condition of Israel grew more desperate, their confidence in an ultimate revival of good fortune must have seemed a tower of strength to desponding minds. During the captivity, when their store of malediction had become exhausted, and only that of blessing remained, they promised nothing but happiness. This, of course, would render the prophetic religion agreeable to the people, and so must have contributed to make it the religion of Israel.

Though most of the prophets included in their Messianic dreams the material greatness of Israel, they were far too highly developed to look for this alone. The noble morality, the noble conception of God, which formed the essence of their religion, made social and political prosperity seem to them of only secondary value. In their ideas, the chief result of the Messiah's coming was to be the reconciliation of Jahveh and his people through their abandonment of sin. They expected the establishment of a new covenant, that could not be broken like the old, when the law of Jahveh should be written in the hearts of Israel.¹ The grandest religious language the world has ever known is the expression of this dream of a people wholly

¹ Jer. xxxi. 31-34.

free from sin; the heavenly new Jerusalem of Christianity is only a vague copy of the ideal Jerusalem which the prophets imagined for earth.

This vision of a sinless age was present to all the prophets, and is the chief feature of their prophecies. It was preserved in the sacred literature of the Jews; and, after forming for centuries a perpetual incentive to religious purity, it finally produced all that is best in Christianity. Back to it are traceable the forces which moulded the personal character of Christ, and stamped upon Christianity its noble morality. The first Christians not only believed in the coming of this ideal age, but struggled actually to realize it, and made the nearest possible approach to success. In the hopes of most of the prophets it was closely connected with the national Messianic ideal, the vision of Israel as a prosperous and powerful state. But it was also connected, in the minds of the noblest prophets, with another Messianic ideal, which I will call the spiritual Messianic ideal—the vision of the whole world reconciled to God, which produced Christianity itself.

As pure monotheists, the prophets believed that Jahveh was not merely god of Israel, but God, the creator and ruler of the world. Naturally, this belief that the God of the universe was their national god was to them a source of intense spiritual pride. Amos makes Jahveh say to Israel,

"You only have I known of all the families of the earth,"¹ and give this fact as a reason for his severity, as Israel, being so highly favoured, had sinned doubly in disobedience to him. Such intense spiritual pride, of course, tended to diminish their purely political pride. Their race, so greatly distinguished in religion, could afford to dispense with material glory. While, viewed thus from a patriotic standpoint, the belief that the God of the world was Israel's Jahveh was a source of national pride, it also suggested a means of gratifying national vanity. The homage of subject peoples constituted the chief attraction of material empire. Here, however, was a chance of receiving the homage, not merely of a few nations around them, but of all mankind. Knowing the universal God, the Israelites might become a nation of priests by leading all men to a knowledge of him their maker, and so have a glory and authority far greater than any that could be given by political power.

It would not be fair to say that the prophets, in the formation of this ideal, were influenced only by patriotism. Spiritually they were too great not to feel the need of a reconciliation between the world and its God. In the mind of the noblest of them, Israel was the servant of the Gentiles, a messenger of God bringing glad tidings of peace to men. Still, on the whole, the glory of Israel was the

¹ Amos iii. 2.

object of their zeal for the conversion of the Gentiles. They dreamed of all the world coming to take the truth meekly from Israel's hands.¹ Jerusalem was to be the sacred city of the earth, and Judæa, as afterwards during the Crusades, the Holy Land. The second Isaiah gives the highest expression to this dream. "Nations shall come to thy light," Jahveh promises Jerusalem, "and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee. Thy gates also shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the riches of the nations. The sons of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee, and they shall call thee the city of Jahveh, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, desolation nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise."² As spiritual guides and teachers, the Israelites thus would be the Levites of mankind, a sacred people intermediate between the world and God.³

The spiritual Messianic ideal of the second Isaiah was both nobler and more vividly conceived than that of any other of the prophets. But nearly all

¹ Isa. ii. 2-4; xi. 9, 10.

² Ibid. lx. 3, 10, 11, 14, 15, 18.

³ Ibid. lxi. 5, 6.

of them have given some expression to it. Even the fiercely national Jeremiah, who hated the Gentiles so bitterly that, though he believed them to be Jahveh's instruments for the chastisement of Israel, he prayed that they might be punished for their assaults on the sacred city, had a vision of their coming to Jahveh.¹ And, indeed, there was an inevitable pressure on the prophets which forced them in this direction. In proportion as the spiritual greatness of their religion was understood by them, they were driven to adopt the spiritual Messianic ideal. The experiences of the prophetic period, besides, must have shown them how impossible it was that the small people of Israel should ever equal or surpass in material power the mighty Gentile empires which then first came in contact with them. So everything tended to make them seek the satisfaction of their patriotism in the extension of their religion.

So far as this ideal entered into it, an inversion in the relations of political and religious feeling now occurred in Judaism. Previously, as pointed out in the last chapter, Jahveh being the national god of Israel, religious feeling flowed in a patriotic channel. In the prophetic age, on the other hand, patriotic feeling began to flow in a religious channel. Jahveh before had been subordinate to Israel; then Israel became subordinate to Jahveh.

¹ Jer. xvi. 19.

It is obvious that there was nothing exceptional in this change, and that the circumstances of Jewish history amply explain its occurrence.

Here, accordingly, we have the historical explanation of the production of Christianity. From the beginning Jahvism was bound to develop into a noble monotheism. Also from the beginning it was a national religion. Being a national religion, in it patriotic was blended with religious feeling. Under these circumstances, if, after its full development, a permanent decay took hold of the state with which it was connected, it had, as an exceptionally pure religion, to become the basis of national pride, to make proselytism its end. But the history of the world during this central period of Judaism is the history of the great empires of western Asia. The small people of Israel could offer no effective resistance to their power, and so, under pressure from them, the magnificent national religion of Israel was compelled to become the expression of patriotism, and to aim at the conversion of the world. So far, then, as Christianity was a movement towards the establishment of the Jewish religion as the religion of the world—and at first it was nothing else—it was inevitable. The conditions of Israel's history made an expansion of Judaism—or rather, an attempt to expand Judaism, its success depending on external circumstances—a necessary occurrence,

A tendency to remodel the form of Judaism was a consequence of the spiritual Messianic ideal. When struggling against rival religions, Jahvism, as we saw in the last chapter, was forced to become strongly exclusive. To keep itself pure from corruption, and also to assert its own high dignity, it had to enclose itself in a hard shell of formal observance. But when it developed into Judaism, and sought to become a world-conquering religion, this formalism was a hindrance to its purpose. The barriers that were so useful for defence interfered with offensive movements. Accordingly, the prophets who recognized the higher ideal of Judaism revolted against its formalism. Its initial rite, circumcision, was the chief mark of separation between the Jews and the mass of the Gentiles. But the whole sacrificial system was also, in its way, an expression of exclusive tendencies. Sacrificing in one manner distinguished the Jew from the Gentile, who sacrificed in another manner. Moreover, circumstances at this time were accentuating the exclusiveness of Judaism. As Israel fell more and more into the power of strangers, of course the people's hatred of strangers grew stronger. This feeling, which, by throwing the people back on the national religion, was in one respect of service to the prophets, naturally expressed itself in Judaism by increasing its exclusiveness. So Judaism was tending to be narrowed just when the prophets wished it to be enlarged.

The prophets met this tendency with a crusade against formalism. Circumcision they declared to be only a symbol of obedience. A people "uncircumcised in heart" Jeremiah called his countrymen. They pronounced sacrifices of small importance in comparison with personal righteousness. "Where-with shall I come before Jahveh and bow myself before the high God?" said Micah. "Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will Jahveh be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jahveh require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"¹ Here the regular sacrifices of orthodox Jahvism are actually compared with the human sacrifices of corrupted Jahvism, and are subjected to the same condemnation. The second Isaiah even goes so far as to assert that sacrifices are offensive to Jahveh, as it is degrading him to suppose that such offerings can please him.² Of course the high development of their religion had also some effect in making the prophets adopt this principle. A system of animal sacrifices did not accord well with their noble theism. A righteous life, besides, they felt to be the best offering to

¹ Micah vi. 6-8.

² Isa. lxvi. 1-4.

God, and they knew that formal observances distracted attention from morality. But still they assailed the formalism of Judaism mainly because it imprisoned the religion of Jahveh in nationality ; they wished Judaism to be a purely spiritual religion to which all national customs would be equally foreign.

Of course they expressed their desires in their Messianic dreams. They dwell upon the glories of the spiritual religion of which Jerusalem was to be the centre, when Jahveh would speak face to face with all his people, with no barrier of priestly formalism between. From the time of the prophets, all who clung to the spiritual Messianic ideal must have shared their feelings ; and when Christianity afterwards broke through the fetters of Jewish ceremonialism, its action was strictly in accordance with the principles of those who originated and continued the movement in Judaism of which it was finally the issue.

The spiritual Messianic ideal from the prophetic age necessarily formed the ideal of the best and purest Jews. In the writings of the prophets, especially in those of the second Isaiah, it remained before the people, a constant incentive to all who grasped the true principles of their pure religion. It was easily blended with the additions then beginning to be made to Judaism, the supernaturalism which rendered Judaism less cold and

unattractive. But though this ideal was sure to continue as the expression of the noblest aspirations of Israel, and though endeavours were certain to be made to realize it, in its completeness it was destined to inevitable failure. So far as the prophets dreamed of Israel's glory being found in sharing the religion of the one God with the Gentiles, they dreamed an unrealizable dream. From the time of the prophets down to the destruction of Jerusalem, the great mass of the Jews, as the years went by, hated all Gentiles with a bitterer hatred. Their religion became more confined within the limits of their nationality, and Jahveh more peculiarly the God worshipped by Jews alone. It is easy to see that Judaism as Israel's religion could not have expanded itself, and that the national pride of Israel could not thus have been gratified. Only by leaving nationality behind, by a movement outward from Judaism of the most spiritual Jews, could the God of Israel become the God of the world.¹

In this Messianic ideal the conception of the Messiah personally was vague and undefined. The second Isaiah expected that the Messiah would simply bring the captivity to a close, and that the Messianic glories would then follow spontaneously as a result of the exhibition of Jahveh's power. This more indistinct picture of the spiritual Messiah was of great service to Christianity.

¹ See Kuenen, "Religion of Israel," iii. 276 (Eng. trans.).

The belief in atonement by vicarious suffering mentioned in the last chapter was connected in a special manner with the spiritual Messianic ideal. All the prophets believed in atonement by suffering; they all thought that Jahveh was punishing his people for their sins, and that the punishment was the necessary antecedent to the restoration of his favour. But to those who accepted this Messianic ideal Israel's suffering plainly seemed to be a means of realizing it. The great preacher of it, the second Isaiah, writing towards the close of the captivity, saw an obvious connection between it and the crowning misfortune of his country. Dispersed among the heathen, the worshippers of Jahveh appeared to him missionaries of the true religion, revealers to the world of its God. He believed that the restoration would be accomplished by the return of the Israelites under the guardianship of the converted Gentiles, to be their priests in the Holy Land.¹ But when the captivity was recognized as an instrument of Gentile conversion, it was of course regarded as a blessing to the Gentiles. Beneficial to the Gentile world, it was not the less harmful to Israel, whose nationality it almost destroyed. Thus the hurt of Israel was a blessing to the Gentiles. It would follow from this, in a mind nursed in the ideas of the Jewish sacrificial system, that the suffering of Israel was

¹ Isa. lxvi. 18-23.

an atonement for Gentile sins. The Gentiles clearly had sinned against God, their ignorance of him was a sin ; but in revealing himself to them he was blessing them, and in blessing them he was of course forgiving their sins. But this forgiveness was shown by means of Israel's suffering ; therefore Israel's suffering was an atonement for Gentile sins accepted by God.

We find the results of this train of reasoning clearly expressed by the second Isaiah. In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which is the great Messianic chapter of orthodox Christians, and which probably exercised an important influence over the mind of Christ, three kinds of atonement are described. Partly Israel's sufferings are represented as an atonement offered for Israel's own sins ; partly Israel's sins are regarded as atoned for by the undeserved suffering of the few righteous Israelites, faithful adherents of Jahveh, on whom the national misfortunes fell as well as on the rest of the people ; while put more strongly, and running through the whole chapter, is the idea that Israel's sufferings atoned for Gentile sins. The beautiful phrase at the end, "He made intercession for the transgressors," means that Israel, though oppressed and bruised by the Gentiles, was still ready to be a mediator leading them to God. In the previous chapter the astonishment of the Gentiles at the fact that so insignificant a people

possessed so great a revelation, is described by the same method of personal illustration, universally adopted by the prophets.¹ Interpreted Messianically, in a literal sense, these passages were afterwards of importance to Christianity.

The prophetic age, as a whole, was thus essentially a period of transition. In it Judaism was established, and the movement towards Christianity begun. Throughout the whole course of Israel's history we see a gradual development of religion, religious forces steadily tending upwards and evolving higher ideas of God. Before the time of the prophets, these forces were working out a pure and moral monotheism ; during and after it, they were working out the release of this monotheism from the fetters of nationalism, and preparing a religion for the civilised world.

The circumstances which at this time were tending to make Judaism a proselytizing religion were also preparing it for success in its mission. The religion of the prophets was too pure to become popular. The absence of supernaturalism, the freedom from dogma, which made it in essence so superior to Christianity, rendered it fit only for the highest minds. Afterwards, when impressed on Israel in general, it was identified with a rigid ceremonialism. That such a religion, deriving no strength from formalism or from

¹ Isa. lii. 14.

national feeling, could conquer the Gentile world, far lower than the Jewish people in religious development, was of course impossible. But just at this moment it began to receive additions from foreign sources which ultimately bridged the chasm between it and the ideas of ordinary men. The dispersion of the Jews, which completed the victory of Judaism, alloyed it with baser elements. So far as its adherents were placed in contact with idolatrous religions like the Chaldean, it was rather secured against corruption. In the Persian religion, however, which it encountered towards the close of the captivity, it found an enemy disguised as a friend. This religion, which was as anti-idolatrous as the Jewish, and which had a nominal monotheism underlying its dualism, was marked by a supernaturalism very different from the simplicity of the religion of the prophets. A large part of this supernaturalism was now transferred to Judaism. The Persian deity of evil became the Jewish Satan, with a multitude of demons under him that made man their sport and prey.¹ A hierarchy of angels was constructed, completely foreign to the prophetic belief in the immediate agency of God. But the most important doctrine at this time introduced into Judaism, whether from the Persian religion or not is a matter of dispute, was the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which

¹ See Tobit iii. 8. How different from Isa. xlv. 6, 7

soon became the chief dogma of the Jewish creed. How far it tended to suit Judaism to Gentile requirements is shown by a curious passage of the Apocrypha, which reads like a description of the doctrine of Pagan Christianity respecting purgatory and masses for the dead.¹ The more philosophical Jews afterwards formed themselves into a party to resist these innovations, but the majority of the people eagerly adopted them. With the spiritual Messianic ideal they were readily connected, as they formed the popular elements needed for proselytism, and as they tended to place religion on a personal rather than on a national basis. We find them the chief strength of Christianity, which, as the successful embodiment of the outward forces of Judaism, naturally laid aside the portions of it unfavourable, and took up the portions of it favourable, to denationalisation and expansion.

Of course these corruptions of Judaism were the result of its becoming a popular religion. No longer confined to the best part of the people, it paid the penalty of diffusion. The rigid ceremonialism, which henceforth was its leading feature, was another consequence of its success. Utterly obnoxious as such ceremonialism was to the instincts of the prophets, it was still inevitable if Judaism was to be the religion of all the Jews. As Jewish political independence faded more and

¹ 2 Macc. xii. 43-45.

more into a memory of a distant past, the people clung more tenaciously to their religion, more based their nationality upon it, and made it the object of their patriotism. This, as it continued, rendered impossible a religious union of Jew and Gentile. A religion professed by Gentiles by that fact alone would have seemed to the vast majority of Jews to be sufficiently condemned. It became steadily more apparent that, in order to convert the Gentile, Judaism had to leave the Jew.

Throughout all this period the expectation of the Messiah's coming remained the sole consolation of the Jewish people. The expectation entered into every part of their action.¹ All Jews believed that, to obtain the Messiah, they needed to be reconciled to God, that their sins kept alive his anger, and delayed the sending of the deliverer. Many an obscure preacher probably cried in their ears, "Repent, repent, that the kingdom of heaven may come," before John the Baptist, by synchronizing with Christ, gained a prophetic celebrity. Indeed, we may be sure that during this long time of calamity many attempts were made to realize the Messianic ideals, that many who claimed to be the Messiah appeared among the Jews, and earned oblivion by their failure. When the empire of Rome began to overshadow them with its massive and enduring power, so

¹ See I Macc. xiv. 41.

unlike that of their previous masters, a conviction spread through the Jews that the last days were at hand.¹ The expectation of the Messiah grew stronger, and the passionate longing of the people tended more and more to secure, as far as was possible, its own gratification. Into an age of dreams and hopes, which seethed with restlessness and discontent, Christ was born.

¹ See Ewald, "Hist. of Israel," v. 360, *seq.* (Eng. trans.), and Kuenen, "Religion of Israel," iii. 277 (Eng. trans.).

CHAPTER III.

THE CHRISTIANITY OF CHRIST.

IT is hardly necessary to say that simply from the statements of the gospels we cannot construct an historical life of Christ. Strauss and Baur have finally determined the question of their historical value. In the first three, it is true, after making allowance for the vast growth of legend overspreading them, useful materials can still be found ; but even these can be depended on only so far as probability is distinctly in their favour. The last is simply a philosophical romance, with the theology of the second century as its basis. We see the figure of Christ through a mist of legend, and its real outlines are hopelessly lost. Characters like the hero of M. Renan's historical novel are merely the projections of imagination, coloured undisguisedly by the medium through which they are viewed. Only by study of the religion he founded can trustworthy knowledge of Christ be obtained.

But in this way, as far as general results are concerned, we can arrive at almost certain knowledge. We can be sure, for instance, that the exceptional goodness of Christ was no figment of the gospels. The new morality which Christianity introduced into the world of practice, the morality which makes inward purity a test of virtue rather than outward actions, must have been derived from him. Its origin must have been in personal influence, and Christ's alone could have permanently stamped it on Christianity. And this, of course, renders it likely that sayings of striking moral beauty attributed to him in the gospels, such as "Love your enemies," "Judge not, that ye be not judged," and the perfect one not in the gospels, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," were in substance actually uttered by him, for they are in harmony with the character of exceptional goodness which he must have possessed. So far, at least, we can have a sure knowledge of Christ which entitles him to our willing reverence.

Not only is it necessary to distrust the positive evidence of the gospels, but even negatively their evidence cannot wholly be allowed. They may suppress what is true as well as assert what is false. For instance, they represent Christ as obtaining great success immediately after his entrance on his ministry. Now nothing could be

more unlikely than this. He could not have been accepted as the Messiah by even a small number of disciples without a long probation previously, a period of struggle and unsuccess. In the gospels themselves the explanation of this omission is suggested, when Christ is said to have been thirty years old at the time he began to preach. At about this age, after a youth of conflict and uncertainty, he probably was first recognized as the Messiah. But naturally those who knew him only as the Messiah could not dream of a period when none regarded him as such. Hence the account in the gospels, the years of development and failure having passed out of remembrance.

The true historical evidence on which to found a life of Christ consists of the statements of the synoptical gospels, tested and interpreted by probability. It is obvious that in this way only knowledge of the broadest and most general nature can be obtained. If special circumstances of Christ's life, as reported in the gospels, are accepted according as they appear to be probable, the result naturally varies with the character of the student. In these cases probability, in the scientific sense, does not exist. And thus far the greater part of the statements of the gospels are properly outside the region of historical investigation. Some are so distinctly improbable that we can pronounce them inaccurate; some are so distinctly probable that

we can pronounce them accurate; but the vast majority of them, the test of probability being absent, cannot be pronounced either accurate or inaccurate; we simply cannot tell.

In endeavouring to determine the nature of the personal character and religious ideas of Christ, it is on this general kind of probability that I chiefly rely, appealing to the gospels to corroborate it more than to it to corroborate the gospels. Such probability in certain cases is the surest kind of historical evidence, and may safely be depended on, even in the absence of written confirmation.

That Christ stood exceptionally high in moral development, was exceptionally good, can be declared, as we have seen, with practical certainty. The evidence of the gospels and the evidence of probability are here in thorough harmony, and the fact has never been disputed. The evidence of the gospels and the evidence of probability equally agree in declaring that Christ was not exempt from the theological illusions of his age, but their declaration is called in question by some. As this point is of vital importance to our subject, we must now carefully consider it.

Mr. Matthew Arnold has given the clearest expression to the belief that the religion of Christ was wholly undogmatic in character. The dogmatic assertions attributed to Christ in the gospels, were, according to him, used only in a mystical sense

which the grosser-minded disciples misunderstood. When Christ, for instance, spoke of his resurrection, he meant that his moral system would triumph after his death ; but his disciples understood his words in a personal sense. Christ, Mr. Arnold says, spoke "over the heads of his followers," and, in consequence, they failed to understand him, and ascribed their own ideas to him. The evidence on which Mr. Arnold founds his theory is extremely slight ; in fact, he practically rests it on the few stories in the gospels where Christ uses figurative language, which his disciples misunderstand, as in the case of his injunctions respecting the "leaven of the Pharisees." Now figurative language of this sort is quite distinct from the mystical language Mr. Arnold attributes to him, Hebrew literature being full of the former and absolutely empty of the latter, and the only resemblance between them is that they can both be misunderstood. Mr. Arnold, indeed, by an elaborate criticism of the last gospel, makes it to support his theory, its mysticism readily allowing this to be done ; but the fourth gospel has no historical value. The real basis of the theory is the reverence which all men feel for Christ, which renders it difficult for them to believe that he held opinions differing from their own, and which also disposes them to imagine that a vast distinction separated him from those whom he addressed.

The strongest argument in favour of the theory is drawn from the unquestionable fact of the greatness of Christ. His moral superiority cannot be disputed, and the success of his system shows that he must have possessed unique personal power. But does his moral superiority, or his possession of wonderful personal power, really prove that he was free from theological illusion? It is obvious to every one that the most exalted goodness may be united with the most implicit belief in the dogmas of supernatural religion. It is nearly as obvious that extreme fascination of character, far from indicating that one who possesses it is superior to ordinary illusions, is a clear presumption that he is peculiarly under their control. The popular power which Christ must have exercised is strong evidence that he shared the popular beliefs. The essence of popularity is sympathy; the popular man must be in sympathy with the people he meets, and must be ruled by the same ideas, whether they happen to be right or wrong. Christ's popularity, his influence over his simple Jewish followers, is a fair proof that he was subject to their religious illusions, that no difference of deep insight separated him from them. People always are irritated by hearing what they do not understand. Had Christ been in the habit of speaking over the heads of his disciples, not many would have remained with him; he might

thus have acquired a reputation as a philosopher, but he certainly would not have founded a Church.

In considering this question, we must keep the facts of experience steadily before us. All who have ever been widely loved and greatly popular among average men have had characters remarkable for moral beauty, and have also been peculiarly steeped in religious illusions. St. Francis of Assisi and St. Teresa resembled Christ in spiritual goodness and in the power of fascinating others, and they held the crudest religious ideas of their times. In our own days, men who are justly called heroes, men like Stonewall Jackson and General Gordon, who win the love and reverence of all who come near them, are sure to believe in the most absurd dogmas. Stonewall Jackson feared that he would lose a battle if he fought it with powder obtained by labouring on Sunday, and General Gordon believed an island in the Pacific to be the private residence of the devil. Christ's fascination of character is additional evidence of his supreme goodness, but it is far from proving that he rose above the religious ideas of the crowd.

The reverence we feel for Christ need not in the least be impaired by recognizing that he was subject to the illusions of dogmatic religion. Of his moral superiority we have certain evidence; and this, and not wisdom, is the true object of reverence. Had he been profoundly wise, seeing

with perfect clearness through the deluding phantasms of life, he could not have been so good. To be supremely good, to rise far above the standard of negative morality, and to be inspired by a passionate devotion to others which leaves no room for a thought of self, is not compatible with the colder temperament which examines the foundations of belief. Wise men may die for a just cause, but they are never willing martyrs; they lack not merely the fanaticism, but the power of forming the exaggerated estimate of the value of the sacrifice, which martyrdom requires. But we never hesitate in choosing between calm wisdom and pure enthusiasm as objects of our praise. And in the same way, Christ's belief in much that we think unfounded should be no hindrance to our reverent admiration of him; we ought rather to recognize that it is the inevitable accompaniment of such greatness as his. Only a noble fanaticism, which leaves no guard against error, could have inspired his life and secured his success.

We may conclude, then, that Christ accepted the common religious ideas of his time, that he believed in the personal God to whom the prophets addressed their prayers and complaints, and in the resurrection of the dead. And now, after this unavoidable digression, we will take up our subject at the point where we left it at the close of the last chapter. In referring to the gospels, I shall

always mean the synoptical exclusively, the last being put aside as hopelessly unhistorical.

At the time of Christ's birth the expectation of the Messiah was rooted more strongly than ever in the minds of the Jewish people. Nothing but the Messiah seemed able to save them from the final loss of the remains of their national independence at the hands of the irresistible power of Rome. For in Rome they saw, not a mere conqueror exacting tribute from subject peoples, but an empire that steadily absorbed into its own vast mass all the nationalities of the civilized world. To the Jews, who valued their nationality above all things, this fact must have appeared a ground for absolute despair. The lower orders might be roused to attempts at passionate resistance, but the higher classes must have seen the hopelessness of a struggle against the Roman power, and must have been impelled to gloomier forebodings by the fear that at any moment the end might be precipitated by the unreasoning fanaticism of their ignorant countrymen.¹ The religion of the Jews, as Professor Kuenen has pointed out,² tended to encourage these feelings. Pride in their religion stimulated their patriotism, and made it harder for them to submit to the conditions of Roman rule. Thus the circumstances of the time would heighten

¹ See Milman, "Hist. of Christianity," i. 82.

² "Religion of Israel," iii. 273 (Eng. trans.).

the ordinary Messianic hopes, and make the people look more for the national saviour. The general unrest, too, would deepen the sense of sin. Wandering preachers of the class of John the Baptist, denouncing the sins of the people, and asserting that their wickedness was bringing on them the threatened calamity, and calling for repentance, in order that the Messiah might be sent to deliver them, such a time would be sure to produce.

In the midst of these Messianic expectations Christ grew up. The agitation and unrest of the period must have powerfully stimulated a nature so impressible in its spiritual beauty. Exceptionally good men are always keenly responsive to the religious influences around them, so Christ must have passed his youth in a world of Messianic dreams. The sacred literature of his race was familiar to every Jew ; and the spiritual predictions of the prophets, the vision of an Israel reconciled to God, must early have enthralled his fancy. National fanaticism could not have found a place in his character. In both Messianic ideals, as we saw in the last chapter, the distinction between Jew and Gentile was made to contribute either to the spiritual or to the material glory of Israel. For the glory of Israel Christ could not have cared ; putting aside national distinctions, he must have lived only for the welfare of man and for the glory of God.

From the beginning, his Messianic desires must have been for the reconciliation of God and man by the conquest of human sinfulness. As he watched the ceremonialism which was then the most distinctive feature of the Jewish religion, he must have echoed the burning words in which the prophets proclaimed righteousness to be alone acceptable to God, and must have denounced all forms that tended to obscure this truth. His sympathy would be sure to be with those whom the Pharisaic rigidity of that ceremonialism shut out and degraded by exclusion, "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The "inwardness" of Christ, the stress he laid on the purity of the heart, in the first instance was probably the result of a reaction against the formalism of his age, with its minutely defined outward morality of law. To restore primitive truths, and to make goodness the essence of religion, must have always been his aim.

Judging simply from probability, we should say that there were likely to be three clearly marked periods in the life of Christ. In early manhood his longing for the Messianic times would naturally express itself in the same form in which the longing of so many of his countrymen was expressed—in the call to repentance. The wickedness of the people being regarded as the cause of God's anger, the best way to remove his anger and, consequently, to obtain the Messiah, was to turn

the people from their sins, Christ's own personal hatred of sin also, of course, urging him in this direction. Thus at first probably he was simply a preacher like John the Baptist, not claiming to be the Messiah, but a forerunner of the Messiah, exhorting the people to repent, and promising them that the Messiah would come as soon as they had reconciled themselves to God. Gradually, while engaged in this work, as he reached maturity and his powers grew to their full development, and as with them came the consciousness of his own greatness, the conviction would force itself on him that he was himself the promised Messiah, to be revealed as such by succeeding in his labour, by converting the people and banishing sin from Israel. This second period would grow naturally out of the first. Compared with the other preachers of repentance, he must have seemed able to obtain success; his preaching, of course, would be far more effective than theirs. Such being the case, hope—and natures like his are always intensely hopeful—would lead him to imagine himself completely successful, to believe that at his call all Jews would turn with pure hearts to God. This result would be sufficient glory for the Messiah; in the dreams of the prophets it had been the chief feature of the Messianic times. During this period he would be uniformly gentle, without bitterness against any class, would speak of coming “to call not the

righteous, but sinners to repentance." Then as slowly but surely it became evident that his task was impossible, that the Jews in general cared nothing for his teaching and despised his pretensions, he would enter on a third period, with the end not far off, in which, still firmly holding himself to be the Messiah, he would appear as the leader of a new departure like Moses, and, applying to himself the spiritual ideal of the second Isaiah, would open his system to the Gentiles, the obstinate and unrepentant Jews being left to perish in their sins. During this period he would become a bitter assailant of those who refused to accept him ; he would denounce the scribes and Pharisees, and, like the prophets, foretell destruction for Jerusalem, and thus finally gain for himself the death of the cross.

Of course no evidence for the first of these three periods can be derived from the gospels. For reasons already mentioned, when Christ was once recognized as the Messiah all the previous part of his life must have passed into oblivion. But in the gospels the second and third periods are clearly indicated ; in fact, by referring to them we explain most of the contradictions in the sayings ascribed to Christ. As probability and tradition are so strongly in favour of them, we may assume the existence of at least these periods to be proved.

The greater part of Christ's active life probably

belonged to the second period. Declaring that the kingdom of heaven had come, and exhorting to righteousness as the condition of sharing in its blessedness, he wandered through the country districts of Galilee and Judæa. To the country he would naturally keep, as there, where the people were less fiercely national and fanatical, his purer conception of the Messiah would more readily find acceptance. In the towns, and especially in Jerusalem, only the national type of Messiah would be recognized ; and so the gospels are probably correct in stating that he came first to Jerusalem in the closing days of his life. The term "Son of man," which in the gospels is his favourite name for himself, was, it is likely, the Messianic title he claimed, as it marks the recognition of humanity alone by the minister of God. "Son of David" was the accepted title of the national Messiah, and though his followers, we may be sure, often applied it to him, he would rather shrink from it himself. He must have gained many adherents during this period ; in the unrest of the age men would easily yield to the fascination of his character, its gentleness and hopefulness being still unspoiled by failure.

As he extended the area of his labours and began to come in contact with the people of the towns, he would find himself in face of serious opposition. Here he would meet, not simple rustics who cared little about ritual and politics,

but legalists and nationalists prompt to condemn him as irreligious and unpatriotic. The credulity of his country disciples would be challenged and his Messianic claims subjected to a hostile scrutiny. The tendency to dwell on the supernatural inseparable from such a character as his would be in sharp contrast to the spirit of worldliness he would encounter. Some Sadducees even would be likely to confront him, requiring proof of the postulates of his teaching, and infecting others with their scepticism.

Then would begin a time of struggle and irritation. All who looked for the national Messiah would be enemies of Christ. They would be eager upholders of the formal and exclusive elements of Judaism, and his disregard of these would excite their bitter opposition. If he neglected traditional ceremonies or associated with the outcasts of formalism, he would be denounced as a breaker of the law, and the friend of publicans and sinners. Gradually this opposition would produce its effect. As the minor customs of the law were more and more put before him as matters of sole importance, he would be forced into hostility against them ; as the outcries of the legalists grew stronger, the whole system of legalism would become more discredited with him. But, above all, he would lose his expectation of converting Israel. When he realized by experience the strength of the obstacles

to his ideal, he would be compelled to reconsider his whole position as Messiah.

The effect of this would be to drive him strongly towards supernaturalism. From the beginning he must have been disposed to put aside the ordinary conditions of life. The exaggerated and unworkable morality of the gospels is probably an accurate representation of his teaching. With his attention fixed on the spiritual glories of the Messianic age, the worldly arrangements around him must have seemed too transient to be worthy of attention. This feature of his character would now enable him to meet the difficulty of his position. He would turn from earth to heaven. Believing in the resurrection of the dead, he would use it to justify his claim to be the Messiah. Rejected by the greater part of his countrymen, no demonstration of his power on earth could be pointed to, but he still could proclaim for himself the future glory of a second coming in the clouds of heaven.

Opposition, of course, would only strengthen his belief in himself. But this belief required that he should realize the glorious ideal of the prophets. If he could not realize it during his earthly life, he would have to realize it after his death. The prophecy in the book of Daniel of one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven, and having everlasting dominion over all the world,¹ would

¹ Dan. vii. 13, 14.

now appear to him to be a manifest reference to himself. Connecting it with the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, the chapter easily admitting of an erroneous interpretation in a personal sense, he would readily form a new conception of his mission. The failure to convert Israel would seem part of his true glory as the suffering Messiah. Despised and rejected of men, he would only be like all God's envoys to the Jews ; his rejection would fill up the measure of Israel's guilt ; and after it the wicked would finally be swept away, and he himself, as Messiah, proved by his constancy under persecution and suffering, would judge those who had rejected him, and establish his everlasting kingdom.¹

The necessity of his own martyrdom would soon become part of his belief. In the state in which Judæa was then, the forces tending in this direction were sufficiently obvious. Only an increase of the opposition he had already encountered, such as would be produced by his coming into collision with the fanatical orthodoxy of Jerusalem, was needed to secure his death as a criminal. There must have been many reasons to make him welcome a speedy death. M. Renan is probably right in conjecturing that Christ began to lose ground during the later days of his life, the irritability produced by constant controversy weakening

¹ See Strauss, "New Life of Jesus," sects. 38, 39.

the personal charm of his character. Death would seem the only remedy for this. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which Mr. Arnold supposes to have been always present to Christ's mind as the embodiment of his Messianic ideal, is likely to have been thus before him in this closing period. There death is represented as crowning the afflictions of the righteous servant of Jahveh, and a glorious triumph is promised as its result. Christ would of course apply the passage to himself, and would look forward to his death as the condition necessarily preceding his Messianic glory. Personal shrinking from pain would count for nothing with him. If he believed himself to be the divinely appointed Messiah, the central figure of all the world's history, he could not have had one feeling that was not subservient to his mission.

As soon as this conception of his Messiahship was developed in his thoughts, he would at once adopt in its fulness the spiritual Messianic ideal. Rejected by the vast majority of the Jews—rejected, moreover, because he was not the national Messiah, he would be irresistibly impelled to proclaim himself the spiritual Messiah, in whose eyes no distinctions of race separated men from God. Failing with the Jews, there was the more need that he should turn to the Gentiles; defeated by Jewish nationalism, Jewish nationalism must have become hateful to him. He would look now for

the establishment of a spiritual Israel, formed of all mankind reconciled to God and delivered from sin. From this time, though he probably did not preach to them himself, he must have included the Gentiles in his system.¹

He would, of course, impress this new ideal on his disciples as strongly as he could. It was now necessary that his system should be preached by them after his death, so that when he came again in the clouds of heaven he might find faithful adherents to share in the glories of his reign. He would strive to prepare his disciples for his death, to prevent them from being disheartened by it, and in doing so he would promise them his return in power. Thus he would himself originate the dogma of his second advent, which was the main support of the early Christian Church. It would not be very difficult to induce his disciples to accept the doctrine. They believed in the resurrection of the dead, and he would merely have to fix in their minds a conviction that his resurrection would be immediate; that he, as Messiah, would rise at once to heaven after his death, thence to return with unlimited powers to punish and reward. To get the first part of the doctrine into their heads may not have been easy; they would not readily understand that their lord was to die still publicly unrecognized, with no proclamation of his great-

¹ See Strauss, "New Life of Jesus," sect. 36.

ness; but once they did understand this, his promised return in glory would seem best to explain it, and would suit it to their ambitious dreams. Probably they never fully understood this portion of his teaching until after his death, when, of course, there would be every inducement to accept it.

It is unnecessary to state how strongly the evidence of the gospels supports this conclusion. Again and again in them Christ appears preparing his disciples for his death, and promising his return afterwards in heavenly glory. But the evidence of probability would be sufficient to establish it. It solves the great problem in the history of Christianity; it explains the passage of Christianity through the perilous period immediately after its founder's death.

Being thus forced to justify himself by appealing to the supernatural elements of Judaism, supernatural conditions would necessarily assume more importance in his eyes. The post-prophetic additions to Judaism mentioned in the last chapter had by this time developed a complete system of salvation and damnation. Heaven and hell were now fully established in the creed of the Jew, heaven being appointed for himself and hell for the Gentile. Christ would naturally accentuate this part of his religion, and adopt the same spirit of exclusiveness. Heaven would be for those who

accepted, hell for those who rejected the Messiah. Probably he now began to lay special stress on the salvation of the soul in his preaching. And thus we can understand how Christianity came to possess in a heightened form the more Pagan features of Judaism.

The same circumstances which were leading Christ to exaggerate the portions of Judaism most favourable to general proselytism, would also cause him to lay aside the portions of Judaism most unfavourable to it. His opposition to the legal and ceremonial elements of Judaism would now be greatly increased. His worst enemies, of course, were those who attached most importance to these, and in their attacks on him formalism must have supplied them with their most effective weapons. This would lead him in time to reject formalism completely. In doing so, he was, as we saw in the last chapter, strictly fulfilling the spiritual Messianic ideal. To what extent he made the renunciation of the law an actual part of his system we cannot tell, but we may be sure it was to a larger extent than his disciples were ready to accept. The forms of Judaism, at least, could not have been regarded by him as necessary elements of his religion. He was forced to make his system a movement out of orthodox Judaism, and he could not have cared to encumber his new religion with the worn-out forms of the old.

The account in the gospels of the closing incidents of Christ's life is probably in the main strictly correct. Sooner or later he was sure to go to Jerusalem. The need to justify his system by preaching it in the capital, and the wish to found it securely by his death under persecution, would alike impel him in this direction. And he would naturally choose one of the great feasts as the occasion for his visit to the city. Though the forms of Judaism had now probably ceased to be an essential portion of his religion, there is no reason to suppose that he personally objected to observing the more important of them. Coming to Jerusalem to keep the passover, he would find it crowded with strangers ; practically the whole Jewish world would be concentrated there ; and thus he would obtain the widest possible publicity, both for his preaching and his martyrdom. That the latter would necessarily follow the former he must have clearly seen. In the capital of Judaism, at a time when a great religious festival excited the fanaticism of the people to the highest pitch, to preach a religion that involved the overthrow of legalism and the equality of Jew and Gentile in the sight of God, and to do this while claiming to fulfil the popular expectations, obviously meant a speedy extinction. So we may conclude that Christ came to Jerusalem at the time of the passover, probably accompanied by many of his country adherents

who were also going to the feast, and that there by his preaching he provoked against himself the fanaticism of the priests and the populace, and was put to death as an offender against the law. Among the incidents related as occurring now, is one that established a great dogma.

In the description which the gospels give of the institution of the Lord's supper, we have statements which are corroborated by an important external authority. The first epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians is unquestionably genuine, and accordingly it ranks as one of the earliest documents of the New Testament. In it Christ, on the occasion of his passover feast in Jerusalem, is said to have broken bread and distributed it among his disciples, and to have poured out wine and given it to them, asserting that the bread was his body and the wine his blood, and ordering them to continue the practice as a memorial of him. Taking this passage in conjunction with the corresponding passages of the gospels, we have in all four statements so much distinctly expressed ; while equally in all four it is either expressed or clearly implied that this distribution of his body and blood meant that his body was broken and his blood shed for the remission of sins ; the only variation in the passages being the omission by the first two gospels of the injunction to repeat the ceremony. Putting this point aside for the moment, we have

in the rest of the description an account in which the three gospels agree, and in which they are corroborated by a trustworthy external authority. Unless probability is decidedly against it, this concurrence of evidence is sufficient to establish its truth.¹

The account, however, has probability distinctly in its favour. If Christ was alive on the day of the passover—and there is every reason to suppose that the gospels are correct when they assert that he was—he would naturally keep the passover supper with his disciples, as otherwise his presence in Jerusalem would be inexplicable. But keeping the passover, with the expectation of his immediate death vividly before him, the celebration must have seemed to him to possess a strange significance. He believed that the first passover feast had been celebrated in the time of Moses, that the blood of the victim sprinkled on their doorways had preserved the Israelites from harm on the eve of their departure from Egypt, and that this had been the earliest rite of the Jewish law. Now he, of course, must have regarded his system, which was to be fully established by his death, as the fulfilment of Judaism. The ceremonies of Judaism, of which the passover, as first, was chief, belonged only to the old unfulfilled religion, and not to the

¹ See Matt. xxvi. 26–28, and Mark xiv. 22–24; Luke xxii. 19, 20, and I Cor. xi. 23–25; cf. I Cor. x. 16.

mature Judaism founded by him. So this passover he was keeping would seem to him, not merely a commemoration of the first, but, in a proper sense, actually the last ceremony of the Jewish ritual. And as it was the last rite of the old, so it was the first of the new Judaism. His disciples now, like the early Israelites, were leaving old ways and beginning a new life as wanderers on strange paths. As the first ceremony of Judaism had sanctified its commencement, so this first ceremony of Christianity might well appear to him to sanctify its commencement, and to mark the transition from the old religion to the new.

But where was the victim of this Christian passover? The Jewish passover was essentially a sacrifice, and the idea of vicarious atonement was clearly stamped on it. The Jews believed that, when the first-born sons of the Egyptians had been destroyed, the first-born sons of their ancestors had escaped, through the sprinkling on their doorways of the blood of a *first-born* lamb or kid of their flocks.¹ Sacrificial substitution is unmistakable here. Now, as mentioned above, Christ at this time had probably taken as his ideal the suffering Messiah thought to be referred to in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. There the supposed Messiah is spoken of as becoming "an offering for sin," and as bearing "the sin of many."² To Christ's mind,

¹ See Exod. xii. 3-30.

² Isa. liii. 10, 12.

we must remember, the idea of atonement for sin by sacrifice was thoroughly familiar, rooted as it was in the Jewish law. If, then, he believed that for him as Messiah a death at the hands of others was ordained, he would at this moment naturally see in his death an atonement offered for sin. Though he must have regarded the sacrificial system of the law as only decreed for a time, he would still feel that underlying it there was a divine principle. Recognizing this principle, with the passage of Isaiah pressing on him a sense of a connection between it and his death, he would be sure to find in himself the victim of the Christian passover.

The idea that his death was an atonement for sin may have occurred to him before. But whether it did or not, it must have been fully developed in his mind by the circumstances under which he kept this passover. It fitted like a key into the peculiarities of his religion. As already explained, his object as Messiah was to found a system which should secure the happiness of those who accepted him; on his second coming, they were to enjoy the felicity of the Messianic period on earth, as well as the everlasting joys of heaven. If they were to enjoy felicity, to escape punishment, through his death, which necessarily preceded his second coming, how readily would that death appear to him, as a Jew, an atoning sacrifice for

their sins! Just as the lamb of the passover had borne, as a substitute for the Israelites, the penalty that had fallen on the Egyptians, so he, as their substitute, would bear for his followers the penalty that would fall on the rest of the world, the time at which his death was to take place heightening the parallel and making it seem to be providentially designed.

As the victim of the passover, part of it having been used sacrificially as an expiation, had then been eaten as food by those whom its sacrifice was meant to benefit, so here Christ would wish his body thus to be partaken of sacramentally after it became an atonement for sin. Sacrifice is usually followed by sacrament; the victim, being accepted by the deity, becomes divine, and those who partake of it are purified by receiving divine elements into their natures. The sacramental side of the passover sacrifice was particularly marked. To complete the parallel, Christ, as the new passover victim, needed to make his body a sacrament. But in his case such a sacrament had necessarily to precede, and not to follow the sacrificial death. It could only be symbolical. He had, as the parables of the gospels show, a natural tendency to use symbolism to express his thoughts. Symbolically, the sacrament, to prevent coarse misconception, would best be celebrated by himself. And so at this passover supper, after the

victim appointed by the law had been partaken of, Christ probably distributed bread and wine as his body and blood, the symbolical sacrament of his approaching sacrificial death, the new passover feast of the new Christian Church. And as the first passover feast had been commemorated in Judaism, so he probably commanded his disciples to commemorate this second one, which fulfilled and abrogated the first, even as his system fulfilled and abrogated the system to which the first belonged, making it thus the only rite of Christianity, which should symbolise in purity the coarse sacrificial ritual of Judaism.

Though, of course, there is no certainty in this conclusion, probability is so much in its favour that we may assume it to be proved. The positive evidence alone is sufficient to establish the fact, and still stronger is the evidence for it arising from its being an indispensable link in a great chain of development.

And so we may conclude that the first distinctive dogma of Christianity was actually originated by Christ himself. The Church started with belief in the Atonement, in the sacrificial death of Christ, the "Lamb of God," for the sins of men. The further explanation of this doctrine belongs to our next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

JEWISH CHRISTIANITY.

SO far in the course of our inquiry we have traced the development of Christian doctrine simply through the religious ideas of the Jewish people. But from this point we shall have to consider the relations of opposite tendencies, the collision between Judaism and Paganism in Christianity to which I have referred in the Introduction. And in dealing with this subject, it is a fair canon of historical criticism to say that so far as any dogma is distinctly Jewish, its origin should be assigned to the earliest period of the Christian Church, and so far as any dogma is distinctly Pagan, its origin should be assigned to a later period, after the conversion of the Gentiles had begun. The justice of this canon is evident when we remember that Christianity at the time of Christ's death had none but Jewish adherents, and that thenceforth it grew to be more and more accepted by Pagans, until at last its ranks were filled with Pagans alone. The

Atonement is the chief Jewish dogma, and the Incarnation the chief Pagan dogma of Christianity, and they obviously conform to the requirements of the canon. For the present we shall be occupied with the doctrines of Christianity which are mainly Jewish in form.

Though the Christian Church started with belief in the Atonement, the dogma at the beginning could not have been fully grasped and understood. For a time it was probably only latent in the doctrines of the Church. His disciples were not likely at once to recognize the significance of what Christ did at the passover supper; up to the last they could hardly have been prepared for his death. But even with a blind obedience they would naturally obey their lord's commands. As they commemorated the Christian passover and repeated its forms, the meaning of it would gradually dawn on their minds. This repetition must have been from the first the centre of the early Church, a distinctive ceremony which brought the Christians together and marked them off from the Jews around them. While thus incessantly repeating the form of sacramental communion with the body of Christ, sooner or later they would be sure to recognize what this sacramental communion implied, the sacrificial character of his death. Then the latent dogma of the Atonement would be fully understood. As Jews, they would readily accept it;

indeed, it would be to them an explanation of their strange position as disciples of a crucified Messiah.

As soon as the first Christians recognized that Christ's death had been an atonement offered for their sins, a feeling of lightness and joy must have arisen in their hearts. Circumstances like those in which they were placed always tend to develop strongly a sense of sinfulness and of alienation from God. But here appeared a means of reconciliation to God and of escape from the burden of sin. And, accordingly, it is likely that now their missionary activity began. The dogma supplied them with a vindication of their lord's greatness. Jesus, as the Messiah, had borne the sins of men, and had become the representative of men with God. The Jews, who had so unjustly slain him, were in special need of divine forgiveness; and we may be sure that the watchwords of the preaching of the early Christians, when they preached only to Jews, were "Jesus and the remission of sins."

Though the commemoration of the passover supper was probably the means of impressing the doctrine of the Atonement on the minds of the early Christians, there is no reason to suppose that at first they attached to it an actual sacramental value. They would naturally repeat the forms of the sacramental feast they were commemorating without considering the repetition also to be sacramental. But before long, as we know from St.

Paul's words,¹ the repetition did become sacramental itself. The Christians then believed that the elements of Christ's body were present in the bread and wine of their Lord's Supper. At first this presence may have been regarded as symbolical only. It is obvious, however, that the delicate symbolism habitual in Christ's language was sure in this instance sooner or later to be misunderstood by the grosser minds of his followers. The passage of St. Paul just referred to shows that he believed the flesh and blood of Christ to be actually present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist—that is, present in them by an act of faith, not changed into them by a formula of consecration. When the common feast of the early Christians had thus become a sacramental commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ's death, their conception of that sacrifice must have been strengthened and made definite. And with this clearer conception of Christ as the victim that atoned for the sins of man, whose body was spiritually present in the food they ate at their sacred supper, would come a greatly enhanced reverence for him. He would seem to them more than human; his Messiahship would gather round it all the highest attributes ever dreamed of in the Messianic ideals of their race. Their full missionary energy would then be displayed. Probably the recovery of the Church

¹ 1 Cor. x. 16.

from the paralysis that must have fallen on it after Christ's death began with the recognition of the doctrine of the Atonement, and was finally completed when the Eucharist became a sacrament, a solemn and mysterious ceremony, the central expression of Christian belief.

The preaching of Christianity must have been far easier after its founder's death. Reverence for Christ could rise to greater heights. Supernatural powers could be attributed to him without any fear of too dangerous a challenge. And, besides, the preachers could disperse themselves. So long as Christ lived he alone could properly preach his system, for all Christians would gather closely round him as their living head. But now every body of Christians was equally near him, no matter where they might be, and had the assurance of his spiritual presence in the elements of the Eucharist. Henceforth the mission of the Church was proselytism ; growth became its evidence of life.

That proselytism began immediately after Christ's death is, of course, very unlikely. The Church probably took some years to recover from the shock of its loss. During this period it could barely have managed to survive as a small body containing the most faithful of those who had followed Christ. Among these picked disciples the development of latent doctrine went on, until the primary principles of Christianity were estab-

lished on a sure basis. Then, proselytism beginning, every member of the original body probably became more or less a missionary. As a select few they were the preachers and authorities of early Christianity. The commands of Christ, as well as the nature of their religion, impelled them to preach with vigour. At first they would naturally address themselves to Jews alone. With the Jews of Palestine they were not likely to make much way. But when they extended their activity to the synagogues in foreign countries they would be more successful. Here, as the fanaticism of race was less, the spiritual ideal of Christianity would have fewer obstacles to overcome. Still in all their dealings with Jews they probably met with little success. To the Jews Christ crucified was indeed a stumbling-block which even the promise of his second advent could not remove. But as soon as the preachers of Christianity touched the Gentiles, they must have reaped an abundant harvest. Such was the disorganization of religion at this time in the Roman world that, notwithstanding the harsh exclusiveness of Judaism, Gentiles in large numbers were becoming proselytes to it. Under these circumstances Christianity, which had dropped all the harsh features of Judaism, and had added to the remainder much that was in harmony with Gentile ideas, must have easily made converts among them. Though probably very soon the

majority of Christians were Gentiles, all the heads of the Church still were Jews, and its principles remained wholly Jewish. This period of Jewish Christianity may fairly be said to have lasted in full vigour until the death of St. Paul.

For more than the second half of this time the missionary activity of the Church centred in St. Paul. After Christ himself, no man influenced the circumstances and doctrines of Christianity more than he. The stress laid upon faith as a means of salvation in early Christianity was largely the result of his personal character. A renegade from the most rigid legalism of Judaism, he naturally, as a Christian, passed to the other extreme, and exalted faith above the righteousness of works. The same recoil from Judaism made him the apostle of the Gentiles. But though St. Paul was as little Jewish as an unhellenised Jew could be, and strained the doctrines of Christianity greatly in the direction of Gentile ideas, his religion was still essentially Jewish. In his epistles—putting aside his references to the resurrection of the dead, made because he was writing to Gentiles who were not familiar with the doctrine—as well as in the other books of the New Testament that belong to this period, we find stress laid chiefly on two dogmas, the Atonement and the second advent.¹

¹ Rom. iii. 24, 25; v. 6-11; viii. 3; I Thess. iv. 16, 17; cf. I Pet. ii. 24.

These two dogmas were closely connected, and were the strength of the early Church.

The doctrine of the Atonement was that Christ had died for the sins of the world. "God was in Christ," says St. Paul, "reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."¹ The term "world," as used in this and kindred passages, can only be understood by keeping the doctrine of the second advent steadily in view. All the glories predicted by the prophets for the Messianic times were transferred in the expectation of the early Christians to the period of the second coming of Christ. They believed that when their lord returned there would be literally "new heavens and a new earth."² This new world, then to be established in fulness, they held to have been actually founded by the death of Christ, which had rendered it possible by relieving man from the burden of sin. But in their case only had sin been thus put away, and accordingly they were the foundation of the world reconciled to God, which after the second coming of Christ would remain alone, the old world of sin and alienation from God which still survived beside the new being then finally destroyed. Christ had left them to preach the gospel, that is, to snatch souls from the perishing to the permanent world. The latter seemed to them the real world, and the other,

¹ 2 Cor. v. 19.

² Isa. lxx. 17; cf. Rev. xxi. 1.

which existed for a time beside it, only a vanishing shadow. For this real and permanent world, then represented by the Church, they believed Christ to have died. The more hopeful Christians might expect that the two worlds would yet become identical, through the conversion of all men before the second advent. Then Christ would come, not in wrath, but simply in love ; not to punish, but simply to reward. This, however, could only have been a rare belief. In general the expectation of the Church was that Christ would come speedily, and sweep away all men outside it, and leave it alone on an earth renewed and glorified. Faith in him was the pass that procured admission to the felicities of his Messianic reign ; to those outside Christianity his coming could only bring confusion and ruin.¹

This new world, the creation of which was begun by Christ's death, and was to be completed by his second coming, the early Christians regarded as a kingdom of light girdled on every side by the old world or kingdom of darkness. It was their mission, they held, to extend its frontiers, and continuously to encroach on the region given over to night. Every inch of ground they gained they believed to be saved from an imminent destruction. For the fervour of proselytism which possessed them rested on the dogma of the second advent. To it

¹ See Milman, "History of Christianity," i. 378.

they looked forward as a blessing to themselves and a terror to the rest of mankind.¹ All men outside the Church seemed to be walking on the brink of a precipice, over which they were shortly to be hurled. Naturally to save as many as possible of these from a danger so immediate and so vividly conceived was to most Christians the chief object of life. Some of the sterner of them, as we know from the book of Revelation, which was written at the close of this period, expected with gladness the coming of Christ to take vengeance on his enemies. But the harsh and exclusive spirit of that characteristically Jewish work could not have been general ; and we may be sure that the Christians, as a whole, felt only pity when they thought of the impending destruction of the proud non-Christian world.

Many strange ideas entered into the expectation of the coming of Christ. It was even thought that at the last moment he would convert and save those who had been unreached by his earthly envoys. St. Paul believed that then, "after the fulness of the Gentiles had come in," Israel would at length be saved.² As to what was to follow the second advent, opinions slightly varied. According to St. Paul,³ Christ would establish after it an eternal and heavenly kingdom of the Christian living and risen dead ; but according to the book

¹ 1 Thess. v. 1-10. ² Rom. xi. 25-27. ³ 1 Cor. xv.

of Revelation,¹ he would then reign for a thousand years on earth, afterwards beginning his everlasting rule.

From the new world then to be completed the Christians believed sin to have been put away by the death of Christ. The doctrine of the Atonement, as they understood it, meant actual deliverance from sin, and not mere deliverance from its penalty. Nothing could be clearer than St. Paul's statement of this.² All St. Paul's epistles are pervaded by a tone of grieved surprise that sin should be found existing within the Church. Sin in his eyes was essentially the mark of the old world. If, then, a Christian sinned, he showed that he did not really belong to the new world; he was under the law, and not under grace, and by the law he would be condemned; he would perish with the perishing world. Probably, under the pressure of such a belief, the Church at this time was the purest society of men that has ever existed. Considering the moral condition of the period, it is likely that the distinction then made between believer and sinner almost corresponded to actual fact. Practically within all was good, and without all was evil. In modern evangelical Protestantism language of the same kind is often used, but only as the shadowy semblance of what was once substantial reality.

¹ Rev. xx., xxi.; cf. 2 Esdras vii. 28-33.

² Rom. v., vi.

The belief in the second advent of Christ in another way must have helped to maintain the purity of the early Christians. Living in the constant expectation of his immediate coming, worldly pleasures seemed too transient and unsure to be worthy of attention. Their belief, too, was invested with a vivid sense of reality. They expected to see their lord in all his heavenly majesty, not under strange and unknown conditions only to be experienced by passing through the gate of death, but in the midst of the familiar associations of earth. They awaited his appearance "in the very world which is the world of all of us," and the shadow of his coming lay on all the thoughts and actions of their lives.

With the fading of so beautiful a dream the real corruption of Christianity began. As the years passed by, and Christ did not appear, the hopes of the Church gradually died away. The doctrine of his speedy coming at length became the last refuge of fanaticism. With it "the freshness of the early world" of Christianity finally perished; the Church never knew again the simplicity and purity which marked this period of its youth.

The expectation of the immediate coming of Christ was the sustaining principle of Jewish Christianity. The loss of it threw the Church completely into Pagan hands. While it prevailed, Christians cared little about the explanation of

their theology ; existing conditions were regarded as too provisional. But afterwards, when a long life seemed to lie before the Church, theological "pseudo-science" was born. New and complex doctrines were needed to engage the thoughts of Christians, and these Pagan Christianity supplied.

Though the Christianity of this period was thoroughly Jewish in the character of its doctrines, the preaching of it was addressed chiefly to Pagans. St. Paul was their representative among the heads of the Church, and preached almost exclusively to them. In turning to them, Christianity had to a certain extent to adapt itself to their ideas. The nature of this adaptation is clearly visible in the writings of St. Paul.

I have said that, in preaching to Jews, the watchwords of Christianity probably were "Jesus and the remission of sins." In preaching to Pagans, these watchwords would not have been worth much. Pagans looked for no Messiah, nor were they likely to be inconveniently conscious of sin. The great doctrine of the Church on which stress was laid when it preached to Pagans, as we have clear evidence in St. Paul's epistles, was the resurrection. Christianity attracted Pagans mainly by promising them the resurrection of the dead. This was naturally the case, as to them, unlike Jews, it was a novel doctrine. But the strength of Christianity in dealing with Pagans lay not

merely in its assertion of the resurrection of the dead, but in the proof of the resurrection it professed to give. This, again, is plainly evident in the epistles of St. Paul. He dwells so much on the resurrection of Christ that we might suspect him to have been tainted originally with the scepticism of the Sadducees. By this peculiarity, however, he was exactly fitted to be the apostle of the Gentiles. With his writings before us, we may be sure that he preached to Pagans, as he is made to do in the Acts of the Apostles, "Jesus and the resurrection."¹ To him the resurrection of Christ was the evidence for the general resurrection of the dead; while his conviction that Christ had risen from the dead rested on the belief that he as well as others had seen Christ after his death.² And so St. Paul could preach the resurrection to Pagans in a very effective manner, declaring that the dead would rise again, and giving as proof of this the fact that one man, Jesus, was known thus to have risen, as after his death he had been seen by many credible witnesses, including St. Paul himself. If God had raised Jesus, why should he not also raise other men? Christ had risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.

Thus while the watchwords of the Church in preaching to Jews were "Jesus and the remission

¹ Acts xvii. 18.

² 1 Cor. xv. 1-20.

of sins," its watchwords in preaching to Pagans were "Jesus and the resurrection." That the evidence on which this preaching was founded should have existed is natural enough. The disciples of Christ, as Jews, necessarily believed that he, after his death, had ascended to heaven, and was living there with God. Such being the case, there is nothing strange in their fancying that he occasionally appeared to them.¹ The death of Christ must have immediately weeded out of the Church all but his most faithful followers. It is not surprising that these, in the midst of the disturbance and excitement of those early days, should have seen visions of their lord, should have imagined that he came sometimes from heaven to console them and strengthen them in their weakness. People so superstitious, in a period of so much supernaturalism, were almost certain to see such visions. St. Paul's own particular vision, which played so important a part in the history of early Christianity, of course can only be explained by referring to the peculiarities of his personal character.

This basing the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead on the resurrection of Christ had nothing to do with the subsequent belief that he rose on earth and stayed there for a time. St. Paul evidently believed that Christ appeared to others

¹ See Strauss, "New Life of Jesus," section 49.

as well as to himself by coming straight from heaven, and that his resurrection had been his entrance into heavenly glory.¹

In another and a more important respect the influence of its Pagan proselytes affected the principles of Jewish Christianity. In preaching to Pagans it was necessary to determine the nature of Christ. For Jews it was enough to call him the Messiah ; their imagination supplied the rest. But Pagans, who had no Messianic expectations, required an explanation of his position as founder of the Church. This influence naturally was most felt by St. Paul, and through him it had a considerable effect in shaping the development of Christian doctrine.

St. Paul believed that Christ "was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the son of God in power by the resurrection from the dead."² Thus St. Paul, as Strauss says, began the deification of Christ. Of course, as Strauss also points out, this was due to the fact that he had never personally seen Christ. Entering the Church some years after its founder's death, when already legendary influences must have been active in exalting him, St. Paul had no knowledge of Christ to check his natural tendency to glorify the master whom he believed to have appeared

¹ See Strauss, "New Life of Jesus," section 98 ; 1 Cor. xv. 5-8.

² Rom. i. 3, 4.

to him in a blaze of heavenly light. The other Christians who saw visions of Christ had probably all known him during his life, and this must have interfered with their impulses to magnify him. Naturally, then, St. Paul went further than the other leaders of the Church, and, having seen Christ only in a heavenly vision, thought of him only as a heavenly being. The conception he ultimately formed of Christ in consequence of this tendency to exalt him is somewhat obscure. The term "son of God" in the mouth of a Jew might have only a vague meaning applicable to any man. As employed by St. Paul, it evidently has a special significance. He seems to have believed that Christ was the true Man, Man as he ought to be. Adam was the first and imperfect man, Christ was the second and perfect man. Thus God was the father of Christ in a fuller sense than that in which he was the father of ordinary men, as he had imparted to Christ more of his own nature. Through this possession of elements of the divine nature, Christ was able to represent and redeem mankind fallen under the power of sin. All faithful followers of him were to be made partakers of his divine characteristics, were to become children and heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, were to suffer and be glorified with him.¹

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 45-49; Rom. viii. 16, 17.

Christ was evidently regarded by St. Paul as made thus peculiarly the son of God by his possession of God's spirit. No idea of his having had a miraculous human birth entered into this belief. God in the fulness of time sent forth his son in the likeness of sinful flesh, born under the law, that he might redeem those who were under the law.¹ St. Paul, however, seems to have believed vaguely in Christ's pre-human existence ;² but the pre-existence he assigned to Christ was potential rather than actual, Christ existing from the beginning of time as the destined deliverer of mankind.³

So the extent of St. Paul's deification of Christ may be thus generally described. He believed that Christ was in a peculiar sense the son of God—that is, something more than ordinary man. Intermediate between God and man, he was at once God's agent and man's representative. But St. Paul clearly makes him inferior to God as well as superior to man, and allows him no power except what is delegated to him by God.⁴ Thus as yet there was no sign of the doctrine of the

¹ Rom. viii. 3 ; Gal. iv. 4, 5.

² See Baur, "Church History," part iv., and "Life of Paul," part iii., chaps. vi. and viii.

³ 1 Cor. viii. 6.

⁴ Of course no importance can be attached to the "God blessed for ever" of Rom. ix. 5, which either, as is generally thought, does not refer to Christ at all, or, if it does, is obviously a late interpolation suggested to the copyist by Rom. i. 25.

Incarnation, though a path for it was being prepared. For the doctrine of the Incarnation, it must be remembered, is not a mere deification of Christ. It is important, not because it deifies man, but because it humanizes God. St. Paul undoubtedly, so far as he deified—it would be better to say divinised—Christ, helped the Pagan tendencies of later Christianity, but there was nothing actually Pagan in his belief.

The death of St. Paul marked the beginning of the end of Jewish Christianity. As the Jewish leaders died off, the vast Pagan majority seized upon power and impressed their ideas on the doctrines of the Church. Between the undiluted Jewish Christianity of its origin and the Pagan Christianity of the second century, Paulinism served as a link which enabled them finally to remain in nominal connection. In the spurious epistles attributed to St. Paul we can trace the steps of advancing Paganism, and observe the struggle for reconciliation which his followers inherited from him. Paulinism was ultimately lost in the Paganism with which its Jewish opponents had identified it. But it bridged the interval between the Jewish and Pagan periods of Christianity, and so saved the Church from a rupture it could not have survived.

CHAPTER V.

PAGAN CHRISTIANITY.

WHILE the movement within Judaism with which hitherto we have been mainly occupied was tending to create out of it a world-religion, outside of it circumstances were preparing to make this tendency succeed. The later additions to Judaism, the supernatural system of dogma which formed the basis of Christianity, were, as I have already said, favourable to its expansion by reason of their harmony with Pagan ideas. About the time at which they entered strongly into Judaism, began a steady break-up of the religions of the Pagan world. The material power of Rome attacked them from below, by destroying the national foundations on which they rested, while Greek culture and philosophy, advancing under the protection of that power, assailed them from above. Under the double pressure they faded away. In the age of the apostles, over the greater part of the Roman empire religion was a matter of sincere belief only

with the lower orders of the people. A few men of thought and learning put it utterly aside. Between these two classes there was the great body of ordinary persons mentioned at the beginning of our first chapter, who had lost faith in the popular religions, but were themselves thoroughly religious. The credulity which always characterizes periods of religious change, when some form of religion is destroyed, though the religious spirit retains its energy, was universal. Besides this break-up of the old religions in consequence of the extension of Roman power, in another way that extension of power more directly prepared a path for a great proselytising system. As national limits were overthrown, of course a religion that ignored national distinctions could more easily overspread the world.¹ Thus when Christianity touched Paganism everything promised it success. In fact, the critical period in the life of Christianity was that which immediately followed its founder's death. While it existed only in Palestine, it was in great danger. When it spread among the synagogues of Jews in foreign countries, it had a surer footing. And when from these, which served as a means of introducing it to them, it turned to Pagans, it was placed beyond possibility of failure.

It is interesting to note that Christianity failed

¹ See Renan, "*Les Apôtres*," chap. xvi.

to conquer the Judaism from which it sprang, while the Paganism seemingly foreign to it everywhere succumbed to it. A few centuries after this time every part of the Roman empire professed Christianity as its religion, while the Jews remained still the same. Paganism was overcome and absorbed by Christianity, but Judaism shook it off as an excrescence without suffering harm. In this fact there is nothing surprising. Judaism was too strong for Christianity to subdue it, while Paganism was a ready prey. The Roman empire, outside Judaism, lay before Christianity like a body without a mind ; it needed a unifying religion to match its political unity, and this Christianity supplied.

The general effect likely to be produced on Christianity by its reception of Pagan disciples may now be considered. It is obvious that Pagans, who were steeped in religious ideas very different from those with which the Jews were familiar, would carry with them into Jewish Christianity different principles of religion. To ascertain the extent of this difference, we must compare Judaism and Paganism.

As a pure monotheism, Judaism stood alone in the world. A purely monotheistic religion tends to produce humility and stress on faith. The two great principles of human action, which Mr. Lecky names as the alternative forces that underlie every

important movement of mankind,¹ a sense of human dignity and a sense of sin, are distinctive marks of polytheism and monotheism. Monotheism, with its one God so far removed from man, inspires a feeling of human nothingness in comparison with him. Polytheism, with its far more anthropomorphic and less awful gods, does not dwarf man thus, but enables him freely to compare himself with the divinities he worships. And monotheism, by making man appear nothing beside God, necessarily exalts faith above good works as a means of pleasing him ; for when the distance between them is so immense, the best that man can do appears a trifle. Both these tendencies of Judaism, as a monotheism, were more than counterbalanced by other circumstances connected with it. The humility the Jews might feel when conscious of the difference between themselves and God was more than outweighed by the pride they felt in their superiority to the rest of mankind as his chosen people who alone had the knowledge of him.² Their superiority to other men naturally affected them more than their inferiority to God. The strict legalism of Judaism also prevented stress on faith from being developed in it, as a multitude of petty observances made it peculiarly a religion of works. But both these principles were latent in

¹ "History of Rationalism," ii. 203.

² See Kuenen, "Religion of Israel," iii. 271 (Eng. trans.).

Judaism, and were only checked by special circumstances attending it as a national religion. These circumstances being removed, the latent principles were sure to be developed. And, in fact, in Jewish Christianity, which was neither formal nor exclusive, their development was unmistakable. Early Christianity was essentially distinguished both by humility and stress on faith, as a glance at the New Testament is sufficient to show.

Simplicity of thought also characterized Judaism. Mysticism was abhorrent to a pure Jew, though a hellenised Jew like Philo might be steeped in it. Simplicity of worship, too, was a feature of Judaism ; for the splendid ritual connected with the temple at Jerusalem was not properly a part of it, but was merely the expression of national pride. When away from Jerusalem, the Jew worshipped in the simplest and purest manner. And, most of all, morality was closely bound up with Judaism. Josephus justly boasted that his religion made virtue an indispensable part of itself.¹ The Jews as a whole were certainly far more moral than the Pagans as a whole.

The opposite of all these qualities characterised Pagan religions. Pagans felt no religious humility, for there was no great difference between their gods and themselves. Pride, a sense of human dignity, distinguished them as men. They had

¹ Against Apion, ii. 17.

not to lay stress on faith, for this pride made them fully recognize the value of their own good works. Mysticism marked their religious thought, and sensuousness their religious worship. Between morality and their religions there was only the loosest connection.

Keeping these facts in view, we can easily understand the change in Christianity which now began. All the characteristics of Judaism just mentioned distinguished Jewish Christianity. Humility, stress on faith, simplicity of thought and worship, and the closest connection with morality clearly marked the religion of the early Church. This was evidently the case because the first Christians were Jews. When, then, the Pagans came in, having wrapped up in their religious ideas pride, trust in good works, mysticism, a love of sensuous worship, and a loose regard for morality, and when before long they alone made up the Church, Christianity could not remain unchanged. Christianity became Pagan because Pagans became Christians. And this is the full explanation of its corruption. The Jews, in a religious sense, were more highly developed than the Pagans, and so when it passed from Jews to Pagans it necessarily deteriorated.

As Christianity was preached in the Pagan world, it continually reached lower strata of Paganism. At first only the best Pagans could have entered the Church, but afterwards, as it grew

in influence, Pagans of a constantly inferior type must have joined it. Thus the corruption of Christianity proceeded, not merely because Pagans in larger numbers professed it, but because, as time went by, a lower, a more Pagan class became included within its ranks. All during the period we are now examining probably belonged to the great middle order of society before mentioned, philosophers and peasants equally being absent. Christianity clung to the cities, and the restlessness of city life contributed to the growth of its theology. We will now trace the results of the direct influence of Paganism on the dogmas of the Church.

This influence naturally showed itself in a tendency towards the exaltation of Christ. He would seem to Pagans the real god of Christianity. God, the purely Jewish divinity, the national deity of Judaism, must have been from the beginning unattractive to Pagans, who disliked Jews, and were accustomed to gods that differed but little from men. The identification by Marcionite Gnosticism of the Jewish god with the malignant creator of matter showed how strong this feeling could become. But for the most part Pagans would simply put God aside, and fix all their attention on Christ. They would honour and exalt him, and regard him as the representative of heaven. Thus Paganism must have tended to develop still further the

Christology of Paulinism. The first result of this probably appeared in connection with the Pauline phrase "son of God." A Jew could not misinterpret the phrase and give it a literal meaning, but a Pagan might do so easily. Familiar with ideas of extremely anthropomorphic gods, Pagans would naturally consider Christ to be the son of God in the sense in which Herakles was the son of Zeus. As the proportion of Jews in the whole number of Christians grew less, the increasing Paganism of the Church developed this tendency, until finally it resulted in the belief in the miraculous conception of Christ, the first distinctly Pagan dogma of Christianity.

The gospels supply us with almost certain evidence that this was the way in which the dogma originated. The genealogies in Matthew and Luke are clear proof that the earlier traditions of the Church made Joseph the father of Christ, and of course the Church was less Pagan then than it was in later times. The doctrine, as Dean Milman points out, is utterly un-Jewish.¹ The Jews always expected the Messiah to be born in the ordinary manner, and they revered God too much to put him in the place of a human father. So the dogma shows plainly that it was the first triumph of Christian Paganism. Jewish Christianity was only able slightly to spiritualize it, and

¹ "History of Christianity," i. 94, note.

to found it in appearance upon an absurd misinterpretation of a passage of Isaiah.¹

While the beginning of the gospel narratives was being constructed by one influence of Pagan Christianity, the end of them was being constructed by another. When the expectation of the second coming of Christ was abandoned, the Church had to assign a different meaning to his resurrection. Originally, and especially by St. Paul, this was closely connected with the second advent.² St. Paul evidently regarded the appearances of Christ to him and to others as preliminaries of the second advent, but now they seemed to stand in another light. Examining the traditions which preserved the remembrance of the visions of Christ seen by the early Christians, the Church found them, of course, clustered most thickly in the period immediately after his death, when the conditions likely to produce them were strongest. Visions seen after that time were probably only occasional and rare, and, with the exception of St. Paul's, they were sure to have little importance. Finding, then, that nearly all the appearances of Christ had occurred within a short period after his death, the Church would naturally make a distinction between this period and subsequent times. Christ obviously seemed to have been more present then than after-

¹ Matt. i. 23.

² See Strauss, "New Life of Jesus," section 98.

wards. It would not be long before the belief would follow that he had actually stayed on earth during this period, before he had ascended to heaven. With his second coming no longer expected, that he should have done so would seem quite natural. The Church having to face a long life without Christ, it was reasonable that, before leaving it to its lonely struggle, he should have stayed with it for a time to sustain its immaturity and to strengthen it for its work. A solemn ascension of Christ in presence of his disciples would seem to be demanded as a suitable close to this period, and with the addition of it the dogma was complete.

As we can see by comparing Luke's gospel with the Acts, this stay on earth was made shorter by an earlier than it was by a later belief. It was probably fixed finally at forty days, in order to include different reports of visions with places other than Jerusalem as their scene, and possibly, through the influence of expiring Christian Judaism, to match the forty days of Moses on Mount Sinai. That Christ rose on the third day after his death was a dogma of older times accepted by St. Paul,¹ founded, it is likely, on a passage of Hosea,² and there was no difficulty in connecting it with the

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 4.

² Hos. vi. 2. It may also have been founded on the accepted date of the earliest vision.

belief in his stay on earth. So the final doctrine of the Church was that Christ rose again on the third day after his death, stayed then forty days on earth, and afterwards ascended to heaven, not to return till the day of judgment and the end of mortal things.

The evidence in favour of this explanation of the origin of the orthodox doctrine of the resurrection of Christ is exceptionally strong. The accounts in the gospels, so confused and contradictory even in comparison with the rest of them, and telling only of occasional appearances of Christ to his disciples, show us clearly the underlying basis of dreams and visions on which the legend was founded. The belief in the resurrection of Christ on earth, we may conclude with almost historical certainty, arose from the late combination of the early traditions of Christ's appearances from heaven to his disciples.

Thus at the time to which we have now come the Church in general believed Christ to be the divinely begotten and humanly conceived son of God, who had risen after his death on earth, and then had finally ascended to heavenly glory. Pagan principles had triumphed, and Paganism was every moment growing stronger in Christianity. The tendency to exalt Christ, already far advanced, had now nothing to check it. Forces were at work which were inevitably destined fully

to deify Christ, to lift him to the level of the Jewish God. The Jewish elements of Christianity, including monotheism, were thus in great danger of utterly perishing. Christianity, in fact, was tending to become a purely Pagan polytheistic religion, with a human being as its most important god, when it was saved by the influence on it at this critical period of a fortunate development in Jewish hands of Pagan philosophy.

Philosophy, from the moment of its first existence, has always by an irresistible pressure been driven towards monotheism. The consciousness in the thinker of his own unity, and the inevitable conditions of thought, alike force him to imagine one power as the cause of all the phenomena of life. Philosophy, when it arises in the midst of polytheism, at first allows the orthodox gods to be the subordinate instruments of this power, but it soon develops a tendency to sweep them utterly away. Then, having shaken itself free of popular religion, it builds up a new religion of its own, in which it asserts the existence of one supreme intelligence, the creator and governor of the world.

When philosophy has got thus far, and has constructed its eternal God, certain difficulties confront it. God, as the great first cause, has to be made perfect, for if he were imperfect thought would have to ascend higher to find a cause of his imperfection. But as the creator of all things, God at one time

must have existed alone, an absolute being simply self-contemplative. When he began to create, he ceased to be absolute, and became a relative being contemplative of his own creation. If as an absolute being he was perfect, how did he remain perfect when he became a relative being? The study of this problem has generally driven philosophy into pantheism, but where it has maintained its hold on theism, it has been forced to suppose that a change occurred in God at the time of creation, by which he remained absolute in regard to himself, though he became relative in regard to that which he created.

Two Gods had thus to be imagined, one absolute and eternal, the other relative and existing from the beginning of created things. But these two had to be one, or else the first or absolute God would have been relative to the second, and so the old difficulty would have been revived. Hence there was need of a mystery ; God was one and yet two, two persons and one substance. The first was God as he was through all eternity, the second was God as he was manifested in creation, his representative with everything but himself. Thus the second was a mediator between the first and the world.

While for purely philosophical reasons philosophy was thus compelled to dualise God, other reasons also impelled it to this conclusion. Holding him

to be pure mind, it had to explain his action on matter. Here, too, it was necessary to suppose a mediator between the material world and God. And in proportion as philosophy advanced in its theism, it extended the attributes of God and raised him to a loftier height above created things; and hence, to connect him with what was so far inferior, a mediator again was needed. But in all cases this mediator had to be a part of God himself, or no difficulty was met; and thus in every way philosophy tended towards a divine dualism in mystery.

All Greek philosophy, except where it drifted into pantheism or pure materialism, was more or less influenced by this tendency. In Platonism especially it is clearly marked. The ideal world of Plato fills the place of the second or relative God, and acts as a mediator between God the absolute and the material world. God, according to Plato, is not the creator of matter, which, so far as it is recognized in his system, is given an eternal existence. The action of God is confined to the ideal world, of which material phenomena are a distorted reflection. At the time of the beginning of Christianity these features of Platonism were strongly developed in the theology of an Alexandrian Jew.

Outside Palestine the most important centre of Jewish thought was Alexandria. There from the

time of the captivity a large colony of Jews had been established. This colony became in many respects almost independent of Jerusalem in religion; it formed and translated its own canon of sacred writings, and even set up a temple of its own. Speaking the Greek language and living in the most cosmopolitan city of the world, the meeting-ground of eastern and western thought, the Jews of Alexandria were naturally affected by the speculative activity of Greek philosophy. The high development of Judaism encouraged speculation in its adherents. The Jewish philosopher had not, like the Pagan, to cast his religion aside when he began to seek out the causes of things; on the contrary, his religion seemed to cover a great part of the philosophical path. Under these circumstances, it is not strange that a philosophy should have arisen among the Alexandrian Jews.

For us this philosophy is represented by Philo, who was born about twenty years before Christ. A Jew by birth, and nominally always one in religion, Philo was so steeped in Pagan thought that he really ranks as a Greek philosopher. The chief object of his life was to reconcile Judaism and Hellenism, to give a philosophical reason for every feature of the Jewish religion. In fulfilment of this purpose, he handled Judaism with considerable freedom, and bent its simple theology into a mystical Platonism.

The tendency which inevitably characterized philosophy to push God back from contact with creation, and to preserve his shadowy glory as an absolute being, of course influenced Philo, who simply as a philosopher was bound to be a pure theist. But as a Jew also, Philo was bound to be a pure theist, with the most reverent conception of God. Thus two forces acted on him, as a Jew and as a Greek philosopher, driving him to the most refined theism, and this double pressure produced what Professor Huxley calls Philo's agnosticism. He was compelled to form a conception of God utterly inconsistent with his character as creator of the world. Philo could not imagine that God had any relations with matter, or that he contemplated anything except the world of his own ideas. So philosophy, helped by his monotheistic religion, forced Philo to pursue the path of theological development which I have described above, to leave God in his pure essence absolute and unknown, and to attribute all the phenomena of creation to a mediator between this pure essence and created things.

In Judaism, language had already been used which, taken literally, almost described such a mediator. Wisdom had been spoken of as God's companion before creation and his assistant or agent in all that he had done.¹ In a passage of

¹ Prov. viii. 22-30.

the Psalms the word of God had been called the maker of the heavens.¹ Language of this kind probably was merely the result of the inveterate tendency of the Jewish mind to express itself by means of personification and symbolism, and had no mystical significance. But the passage last referred to, derived of course from the formula of creation in the first chapter of Genesis, seems to have guided Philo in his difficulty. He made the "Word" of God the required mediator, God's agent and representative in all his actions.²

Philo's conception of the Word is shrouded in the deepest mysticism. In language worthy of the Athanasian Creed, he asserts that it is neither created nor uncreated.³ At one time he makes it distinct from God, at another a simple manifestation of God. These contradictions reveal his meaning only the more plainly. He regarded the Word as the modification of God which necessarily preceded creation, God the relative, while God the absolute remained outside it and yet not separate from it. Contradiction, of course, was inevitable. As a monotheist, for him there could

¹ Ps. xxxiii. 6.

² There can be little doubt that *ὁ λόγος* in Philo means the word rather than the reason of God. He evidently used the term as a Jew, with the language of Genesis in his mind. This language itself is an interesting product of eastern anthropomorphism, which naturally conceived God as working like a despot by simply issuing his commands.

³ Quis . . . Heres, 42.

be but one God ; as a theistic philosopher, he had to push this God back from contact with the world. Hence he was compelled to imagine a manifestation of God, distinct from him and yet mystically one with him, to bear the burden of creation, and to represent the divine nature with all outside itself.

On the theological system of Philo, which was widely diffused at the period of its greatest danger from the pressure of Paganism, Christianity now drew largely to avert its ruin. This product of Pagan mysticism was exactly what it needed at the time. It was in danger, through its deification of Christ, of losing its monotheism and of worshipping a human God. By identifying Christ with Philo's Word, every difficulty was overcome. The doctrine of an incarnation of a divine being in a human form had already entered into Asiatic religion, and, in a more familiar shape, was a common feature of western Paganism. Christ, as the Word made flesh, could be raised to the level of God without destroying monotheism ; the Jewish God, as the absolute and unknown, could be reduced to the position of a constitutional sovereign ; by a mystery the impulses of the Church could be satisfied, and yet the purity of Christianity be preserved.

"Philo," says Professor Kuenen, "gave the Church a formula commensurate with her ideas

of her founder."¹ But Philo really did much more. He gave the Church a means of reconciling conflicting tendencies within it, of satisfying at once the higher and the lower class of religious instincts. And by doing so he saved Christianity. If this means of reconciliation had not been provided, Christianity would have sunk to the level of Paganism, and would have fallen among the ruins of the empire. Still we must not conclude that the doctrine of the mystic union of the persons of the Trinity was, except in a secondary sense, derived from Philo. Primarily it was derived from the necessities of Christianity. By deifying Christ, the Church prepared the way for that doctrine and the dogma of the Incarnation depending on it. Before Philonism entered into Christianity, Christ was man made God; afterwards he was God made man; but before and after alike he was the object of Christian worship.

The Church adhered closely to the philosophical basis of the doctrine. Christ, as the Word, was made the sole instrument of creation, God the relative; God the absolute, the Jewish God, was left in lonely supremacy, unnoticed except in the theological philosophy of Christianity. We can see the doctrine in its early shape best in the fourth gospel, which was written about the middle of the first half of the second century, in order

¹ "Religion of Israel," iii. 202 (Eng. trans.).

to give it a basis in the life of Christ.¹ The gospel was probably composed in Asia Minor, where Gnosticism and the Asiatic fondness for mystery would naturally facilitate the development of the doctrine. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by means of him, and without him was not anything made."² That is, at the beginning of creation, the Word existed with and as God, and became the agent by whom all things were created. But of course to the Church the Incarnation was the most important fact. "The Word became flesh;"³ Christ was God incarnate. The Church might now safely worship its founder. As God, the human Christ could be adored, while nominally monotheism was maintained.

It was long before the doctrine was finally settled. Not until early in the fourth century, at the Council of Nicæa, did the Church define the dogma in its fulness. During this period different opinions prevailed respecting it, until at last, on the question of Arianism, two great parties made

¹ The gospel being written in order to satisfy a need of the Church, it is obvious that this need would ensure its immediate acceptance. The Church was not likely to question the genuineness of a document which contained exactly what it required. So we may safely assign the composition of the gospel a date immediately preceding that of the first trustworthy evidence of its existence.

² John i. 1, 3.

³ Ibid. i. 14.

it their battle-ground. In the controversy the orthodox contention was philosophically justifiable. Christ, as God the relative, had to be of one substance with God the absolute, or no absolute God remained; while if in substance also he was not eternal, he ceased to be God at all. Arianism, in fact, was simply Christian rationalism; it endeavoured to explain the relationship of God the Father and God the Son. But the essence of the dogma is pure inexplicable mystery, and rationalism could not touch it without destroying it. In the Nicene Creed it is stated in its proper form. "I believe in one God, maker of heaven and earth, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten son of God, begotten of his father before all worlds, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made." Here the philosophical basis of the dogma is shown in the clearest manner. God was modified and Christ produced before creation began, and by means of Christ the work of creation was performed. We must carefully remember that the Nicene Council did not assert the eternal existence of Christ as a distinct being. He existed eternally, but in God the absolute before the creation of things. This is declared plainly in the damnatory clauses attached to the original creed by the Council, one of which anathematized him who should say that

Christ had not existed before he was begotten. It was not until long afterwards, in the Athanasian Creed, that the eternal existence of Christ as a person of the then fully developed Trinity was made a dogma of the Church, notwithstanding the absurd contradiction in terms involved in its statement. As expressed in the Nicene Creed, putting aside the misleading words "Father" and "Son," inherited from an earlier belief, there is no such direct contradiction in the doctrine. God as one existed eternally ; God as two persons only from the beginning of things.

Thus the mystery of one God in two became a part of Christianity. The Church believed in God, and worshipped him as manifested in Christ. The incarnation of God was henceforth the doctrine dearest to the Christian. His God was thus brought near to him, and presented to him in a form he could readily grasp. And, besides, the love felt by the Church for its founder was strengthened by the belief that he had renounced divine glory to come to the assistance of men. The God who had become man in his love for men, and for their sakes had endured suffering and shame, inspired the passionate devotion which, in the darkness of medieval Christianity, shone with a blaze of light. As the figure of the human Christ faded away in the dim distances of the past, the figure of the divine Christ was able to replace it,

and to kindle anew the flame of zeal which had marked the beginning of the Church.

The second great dogma of Christianity had now been developed. The Incarnation took its stand beside the Atonement in the doctrines of the Church. Henceforth Christian theology was a mixture of Judaism and Paganism. For when this new essentially Pagan dogma of the Incarnation was added on, the old essentially Jewish dogma of the Atonement had entered too deeply into the life of Christianity to be laid aside. Both had to be accepted by the Christian. And, unfortunately, they happened to be utterly inconsistent. The doctrine that Christ had borne the penalty of human sins, and had died as an atoning victim, did not harmonize with the doctrine that Christ was God. That God has forgiven human sins and laid the penalty on a victim chosen for the purpose, is a doctrine strange indeed, but perfectly natural when viewed from a Jewish standpoint; but that God has forgiven human sins and laid the penalty on himself is a doctrine which, viewed from any standpoint, cannot be other than a hopeless puzzle.

Incompatible as the two dogmas are, Christian theologians of course have endeavoured to reconcile them. Only one explanation of the difficulty has been seriously offered. This is, that an absolutely sinless victim was required to become an atone-

ment for human sins, and that such a victim could not be found outside the person of God himself. A reference to Pauline Christianity at once disposes of this explanation. Even if Christ as merely a man could not be sinless, he might be more than man without being actually God. From its very beginning, the Church regarded Christ, as the Messiah, as one greater than ordinary men, though still thoroughly human. Long before the dogma of the Incarnation was in existence, Christians looked on Christ as sinless, and connected his sinlessness with the Atonement.¹ Nevertheless, the explanation is the best available. It has created the doctrine of the "contract in the council of the Trinity," as Mr. Arnold calls it. God the Father's sense of justice could be satisfied only by the self-sacrificing love of God the Son, and hence the death of Christ upon the cross. It is certainly a characteristic example of a theological explanation.

The two great dogmas remained really irreconcilable. The Jewish dogma of the Atonement and the Pagan dogma of the Incarnation entered into Christianity as the results of opposite religious tendencies, and they could never be brought into harmony. The inevitable attempt to reconcile them is chiefly responsible for the formation of the complex mass of theology which so greatly distinguishes Christianity. One or the other can

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 22-24.

strongly influence individual Christians, but it is impossible for both at once to occupy the same mind.

Now that we have examined the chief consequences of the transition from Jewish to Pagan Christianity, and dealt with the greater part of the doctrine of the Trinity, we must investigate the means by which that doctrine was completed by the inclusion of the third person, the Holy Spirit.

Throughout the earlier books of the New Testament we find constant references to the Spirit as a presence abiding with the Church. As used most frequently, the term simply means inspiration, the influence of God on individual Christians. This sense was derived directly from the Old Testament. Jahveh's messengers to his people are there often described as filled with his spirit, as inspired by him for their mission. Naturally the early Church believed that this inspiration was continued under the new dispensation, and that the apostles, its leaders, were filled with the spirit of God to enable them to perform their work. But a new feature was introduced into the belief; the Church held that not merely leading Christians but all Christians were thus filled with the spirit of God. This was the natural consequence of the Messianic prophecies. Among the glories of the Messianic times, the prophets often included, as the result of the reconciliation of Jahveh and Israel, the resting of the

inspiration of God on all his people, all being his servants just as they were themselves. Of course the early Jewish Christians applied these prophecies to themselves, and believed that the spirit of God rested on all the people of his true Israel, the Christian Church.

But in the early books of the New Testament we also find the term "spirit" used in a sense applicable only to a distinct being. St. Paul, in a remarkable passage, speaks of the Spirit as interceding with God for man.¹ In order to understand the origin of this belief of the early Church that the spirit of God, as a distinct being, sustained it in its struggle with the world, it must be remembered that the Jewish Christians regarded Christianity as a movement from among the unconverted Jews similar to the movement of ancient Israel from among the Egyptians. They continually looked for analogies between their circumstances and what was related of the exodus from Egypt. An angel was believed to have led the Israelites against their enemies,² and the Church would naturally expect a corresponding representative of God to watch over its progress. But by the prophets the name "spirit" had been given to this angel;³ and so the early Christians, believing

¹ Rom. viii. 26, 27.

² Exod. xxiii. 20-23.

³ Isa. lxiii. 9, 10; Haggai ii. 5; cf. Neh. ix. 20. It was probably with reference to the storm as the most destructive phenomenon

that the spirit of God rested on the Church, personified it vaguely and made it a divine representative abiding continually with them. They regarded it as the substitute for the personal presence of Christ which had come to them immediately after his death. And thus the belief in the Holy Spirit was connected with the expectation of the second advent ; it had come when Christ had left the Church, and when he returned its mission would be ended.

When the expectation of the second advent was abandoned, and a stay on earth after his death was assigned to Christ, the Church's ideas of the Spirit underwent a further development. As it was the substitute for his presence, it could only have come after his ascension. Just as the ascension had been imagined as a suitable close of Christ's stay on earth, so now a solemn ceremony was imagined to mark the entrance of the Spirit on its mission. The day of Pentecost, the recognized anniversary of the delivery of the law on Mount Sinai, appeared the fittest time for this ceremony.¹ As the founding of the law was regarded as the true beginning of the life of Israel, the coming of the Spirit seemed to match it and to form the true beginning of the life of the Christian Church.

of nature that the name "breath of God" was given to the angel commissioned by him to destroy the enemies of his people.

¹ Milman, "History of Christianity," i. 352.

The construction of this tradition, as we have it in the Acts of the Apostles, was one of the last results of the influence of Judaism on Christianity.

At about the same time this influence was shown in another doctrine in connection with the belief in the Holy Spirit. I have already said that, when the mainly Pagan dogma of the miraculous conception of Christ was created, Jewish Christianity was able slightly to spiritualize it. By making the Spirit the agent on the divine side of that conception, the dogma was as far as possible purified from its taint of grossness.

Until after the time of the Nicene Council, the general belief in the Holy Spirit remained in this vague undefined form. The Church regarded it as a personified influence, and gave it little attention. In the Nicene Creed there is no dogma of the Trinity; only two persons of the Trinity as yet existed. In the fully developed Creed merely vague language is applied to the Spirit; it is spoken of as a distinct being, but its union with the Father and the Son is not asserted. The phrase, "Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son," shows, as Feuerbach points out,¹ how loose an idea of personality was attached to it, and is very different from the precise terms in which the Creed defines the production of the Son. The subsequent dispute between the Eastern and Western Churches

¹ "Essence of Christianity," chap. xv.

in reference to the "filioque" of the Latin form of this Creed rendered it impossible for Christian theology to remain satisfied with the Nicene definition of the Spirit. Always regarded as divine, there was now a natural tendency to declare it to be God. A mystery of three in one was a puzzle no more perplexing than a mystery of two in one. And so the Holy Spirit was included in the divine Government, and the dogma of the Trinity was complete.

The full doctrine of the Trinity, philosophically expressed, is this. God the Father is God the absolute, incomprehensible and unapproachable by created things. God the Son is part of God the relative, the creator and saviour of the world. God the Holy Spirit is the rest of God the relative, the sustainer and guide of the world. Thus it is evident that the third person of the Trinity philosophically has no existence; its functions are only carved out of those of the second. And this philosophical non-existence of the third person has its reflection in theology. In spite of the Athanasian Creed, the Holy Spirit is only a shadow in Christian belief. Intellectually the sincere Christian is convinced of the existence of God the Father; emotionally he is convinced of the existence of God the Son; but of the existence of God the Holy Spirit he is not convinced at all, and he asserts it merely in the empty forms of traditional dogma.

We have now dealt with all the chief dogmas of Christianity. The Atonement, the Incarnation, the full doctrine of the Trinity, and the more important of the circumstances believed to be connected with the life and death of Christ—in fact, all the dogmas of the Creeds, have passed under our review. Only minor doctrines, in regard to which there are differences of opinion among Christians, remain to be noticed.

CHAPTER VI.

CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY.

FROM the time of the completion of the doctrine of the Incarnation, Christianity steadily advanced towards Paganism. Gradually all the characteristics of polytheism crept into the Church. Idolatry, embodied specially in an important doctrine to be mentioned presently, was embodied generally in the worship of images. The great principle of local government in religion which distinguished Pagan polytheism became Christian by the worship of saints. This was soon the chief feature of ordinary Christianity. To the average Christian the local saint appeared the representative of heaven, the appointed agent through whom heavenly blessings were to be obtained. The Christian doctrine of the soul's immortality, originally derived from Judaism, was Paganised into a resemblance to the ideas on the subject which had vaguely entered into most forms of Paganism. The old belief of the Jewish Church

that dead Christians "slept" until the resurrection had become heretical by the middle of the third century.¹ The doctrine of purgatorial penance was introduced into Christianity. For this, indeed, quite apart from Pagan influence, there was a very good reason. In the early days of the Church, with the moral influence of Judaism still strong on it, and the danger of persecution keeping it pure from unworthy members, probably almost all Christians were fairly good. Being good, they were fit for heaven or the heavenly reign of Christ; and so there was no difficulty in making the simple acceptance of Christianity the test of salvation. But when the Church became popular, and especially when it became the acknowledged religious system of the empire, it was plain that a large proportion of its members were by no means fit for heaven. And yet, with its looser Pagan hold on morality, it did not care to consign to damnation faithful believers in its doctrines. The old ideas, latent generally in Paganism, and given special expression in the mysteries, of penal purification from evil exactly met the difficulty, and accordingly they were incorporated in Christianity. As before in the case of the Incarnation, it was the need of the Church that really created the doctrine; Paganism only determined its form.

Christianity took all its supernaturalism of evil

¹ See Eusebius, "*Ecclesiastical History*," bk. vi. chap. 37.

from Judaism, that is, from the later developments of Judaism, with hardly the slightest change. The belief in a chief devil, having subordinates under him, in hell or some such kind of irrevocable punishment, characterized late Judaism as much as Christianity. In general, this supernaturalism of evil was less strongly developed in Pagan religions, or rather, to speak more precisely, it was a feature of eastern far more than of western theology. Still Christian Paganism, though mainly western, had no difficulty in accepting it, and it afterwards became the chief support of medieval superstition.

The decline and final ruin of the empire of Rome transformed the outward structure of Christianity. The empire died under the hands of northern barbarians, but it attained a resurrection in the shape of the Papal Church. After the separation of the Eastern and Western Churches, the line of Christian development passed through the latter alone, the former remaining stagnant in consequence of its union with political despotism. The free Church of the west, becoming the real representative of Christianity, gradually embodied in itself all the attributes of imperial power. The Pope succeeded the Emperor; bishops succeeded the provincial legates; the religious tyranny of Catholicism succeeded the political tyranny of Cesarism. The pomp and ceremonial of the empire were transferred to the Church. The spirit

of sensuous worship latent always in Christian Paganism of course was encouraged by this, and expressed itself in a complex ritual. But most of all Catholic imperialism exalted the clergy above the laity.

This exaltation of the clergy was the direct result of the transference of the imperial power to the Church. The long reign of despotism in the empire had unfitted the people of it for any approach to freedom. Just as formerly they had submitted to the material power which had had its centre in Rome, so now they submitted to the spiritual power which had its centre in Rome. Only by the slow training of many centuries was part of the population of Europe prepared for resistance to clerical tyranny. The Reformation rested on the political development of the peoples among whom it was successful. The clergy were the guardians, for good or for evil, of the childhood of the modern world.

The complicated system of sacraments which now arose in Christianity was largely the expression of priestly power. The distinction made between clergy and laity in the celebration of the Eucharist showed this in its clearest form. But most of all the power of absolution gave the priest an unlimited supremacy. Holding the keys of heaven and of hell, he was the master of the Christian's soul. The foundation of this doctrine,

as well as that of the general recognition of an authority peculiar to the clergy, was laid in the willing reverence felt by the early Church for the apostles, for the men who had actually seen its founder. Clerical despotism cannot be ascribed to the spirit of Paganism as distinguished from the spirit of Judaism. But still, in its extreme development under the pressure of changes in the Pagan world, it was a Pagan feature of Christianity.

A most important distinctly Pagan doctrine was connected with this idea of clerical sanctity. I have already referred to the belief of the early Church that the body and blood of Christ were really present in the elements of the Eucharist. It is quite clear from the language of St. Paul that this belief in the real presence was not a belief that the elements were actually changed into Christ's body and blood.¹ By the faith of the communicant the sacrament was accomplished, and without faith it had no existence. The Eucharist was evidently then regarded as a constantly recurring sacrament of the once offered sacrifice of Christ's death, which it commemorated and declared until he came again. That this was an exceedingly delicate doctrine which could be easily misinterpreted is obvious. It naturally developed into a grosser form when Paganism, with its leaning towards idolatry, became paramount in the Church. The

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 29.

elements were then formally consecrated, and were regarded as the actual flesh and blood of Christ. As his body, they were laid on the altar and made an object of worship. This, of course, was simple idolatry. United with the dogma of the Incarnation, it enabled the Christian to adore God as visibly present in a material shape. The doctrine was connected with the exaltation of the clergy, as the power of consecration was confined to them. Thus the sacrament of the Eucharist became the sacrifice of the mass. The elements being actually changed into his flesh and blood, Christ was again made a victim ; his sacrificial death was repeated as often as the ceremony ; and so the Jewish dogma of the Atonement was linked with ideas utterly antagonistic to Judaism.¹

The deification of the Virgin Mary was another wholly Pagan development of Christianity. Female divinities were common in Pagan polytheism, and female saints replaced them in Christian Paganism. After Christ, as man, had been made the God of Christianity, this tendency to give both sexes divine representatives produced the exaltation of the Virgin as his female correlative. She became the goddess of Christianity, the real third person of the Trinity, as Feuerbach calls her.² As mother

¹ The origin of this doctrine must not be confused with the scholastic defence of it.

² "Essence of Christianity," chap. vi.

and wife of God, she satisfied the human instincts of Pagan religion ; and so the Church ultimately put all heavenly power into her hands. The asceticism of later Christianity at the same time created the dogma of her perpetual virginity. At last, as a divine being, she was encircled with an atmosphere of miraculous privilege even from before her birth.

The most striking feature of Pagan Christianity, monasticism, was due to a variety of causes. In part it had its origin in the personal character of Christ. His insistence on inward purity was not far removed from asceticism. But though monastic asceticism may have had some of its roots in later developments of Judaism, it was foreign to Judaism as a whole. Judaism was remarkable for its clearness and balance ; it pushed nothing too far. Monasticism in reality was chiefly derived from eastern Paganism, from the tendency towards asceticism so common in Oriental religions. The same tendency produced another important effect on western Christianity, namely, the celibacy of the regular clergy. When this became an accepted doctrine, the finishing touch was given to clerical power. Henceforth the Roman Church was the most highly organized ecclesiastical system the world has ever seen. With no recognized interests outside his calling, every priest belonged body and soul to a vast dis-

ciplined mass which moved and acted like one man.

Thus highly organized, the Church plunged into the darkest period of the Middle Ages. For the evils of this period Christianity cannot fairly be held responsible, except in so far as it contributed to the ruin of the Roman empire. Throughout it, on the whole, the Church was a centre of light, keeping alive the embers of civilization, and softening the barbarous tendencies of the time. But in passing through it Christianity suffered fearfully. The ignorance and harshness and corruption of the age were stamped ineffaceably upon it. And this was inevitable. In every civilized country at almost every time there are sure to be two forms of the general religion, one popular, the other that of the more educated classes. The popular religion, resting on ignorance, is always a mere superstition; the other religion, kept clear by partial knowledge from offensive crudities, is the recognized form. But during the worst period of the Middle Ages there was no such distinction; all religion was popular; even the highest classes were hopelessly lost in superstition. The gloom of this superstition, the shadow of the wretchedness of the age, left a lasting mark on Christianity. The terror of life was transferred to death; death was associated with the most repulsive images, and closely connected with hell. The fear of hell be-

came the motive power of religion ; to escape hell was to the Christian the end of life.¹ The superstitious elements from which Christianity is now struggling to release itself were mainly developed in its passage through this period.

During it the moral corruption of Christianity was enormous. The Church laid stress, not on righteous conduct, but on orthodox thinking. Heresy was irremediably damnable, but crimes and sins could be easily compounded for. The immorality of the clergy, due partly to the general corruption of the time, and partly to their legal celibacy, was closely connected with the toleration of sin shown in the action of the Church. Rotten itself, the ecclesiastical power was ever ready, in return for material benefits, to open the gates of heaven to secular sinners. The whole course of medieval Christianity was a progress towards the doctrine of indulgences which immediately provoked the Reformation.

The moral decline of Christianity was the mark of its progress towards Paganism. It receded further from its original basis in Judaism as its dogmas became more complex and its hold on morality more uncertain. The complexity of doctrine encouraged the decline in morality, re-

¹ Before the beginning of this period, Christianity was inspired chiefly by the hope of gaining heaven ; since the beginning of it, Christianity has been inspired chiefly by the hope of escaping hell.

ligious attention being drawn by it from practical conduct to the consideration of nice points of theology. A reaction against this tendency was inevitable. Christianity had shared in the descent of European civilization, and when European civilization began to ascend, Christianity had to ascend along with it. But the reaction, as it was against a corruption which was inextricably linked with the Paganism of the Church, could not fail to oppose itself to Paganism, that is, to recoil back to Judaism. And this is the explanation of the Reformation. It was the revival of Judaism in Christianity. As the revival of Jewish Christianity, it was sure to occur sooner or later; once the thought and knowledge of Europe awakened from their medieval slumber, the revolt against Paganism was bound to begin. The renewal of intellectual life involved the renewal of moral life. The restored conscience of Europe would protest first against the later corruptions of Pagan Christianity; but these were inseparably connected with earlier ones, and so step by step reformers would have to ascend along the line, until at last they would find themselves the champions of Jewish Christianity, contending against the forces of Paganism.

Thus the great schism which the Reformation caused in Christianity was inevitable from the first. Paganism could not be eradicated by the

revival of Judaism. The more ignorant and backward races were sure to cling to it in opposition to the progressive spirit which revolted from it. The schism in Christianity was as inevitable as the schism which it occasioned in Judaism, the necessity of which was shown in our second chapter. And just as the expansion of Judaism which Christ made a practical success was in its main features quite independent of the influence of his personal character, so the main features of the Reformation were determined apart from the personal influence of the Reformers.

From the time of the Reformation Jewish and Pagan Christianity stood side by side. Protestantism revived the principles of the early Church ; Catholicism retained the principles of Paganism. Within the lifetime of Luther the change was accomplished. He himself, because he assailed one immoral doctrine of the corrupt Roman Church, was forced to travel back along fourteen centuries of religious development.

Of course Protestantism cannot be exactly the same as the religion of the Jewish Church. Just as Pagan Christianity was compelled to retain Jewish dogmas, so Protestantism was compelled to retain Pagan dogmas. It had nothing to rest on except the Canon of Scripture, and part of the New Testament is Pagan in spirit. Accordingly, the dogmas of earlier Paganism, which

were developed while it was still mixed with Judaism in the Church, were preserved in Protestantism. It kept, for instance, the great Pagan dogma of the Incarnation. Still, so far as general principle is concerned, Protestantism fairly represents Judaism, and Catholicism Paganism in Christianity. This is evident if they are fully compared with each other.

The Pagan character of Catholicism has already been shown. As Catholicism—and this term covers more than the Roman Church—has retained all the doctrines which we have examined as representative of Paganism in Christianity, this is obvious. Similarly the non-Pagan character of Protestantism is clear from its rejection of all the later of these doctrines, from the worship of saints to the immaculate conception. Its Jewish character must be shown by a reference to the principles of our comparison of Judaism and Paganism.

The chief distinctive doctrine of Protestantism is justification by faith alone. That in this it resembles Jewish Christianity, a glance at St. Paul's epistles is sufficient to show. It is also plain that this doctrine is closely connected with the great Jewish dogma of the Atonement. According to it, sins are washed away by the blood of Christ, the victim offered to God. But the benefits of the sacrifice are obtained solely by faith ; the merits of the Christian cannot enhance

its value. Still more closely, however, is the doctrine connected with the feature distinctive of Protestantism as of Judaism, its loftier conception of God. This, as was pointed out in our last chapter, is the peculiarity of monotheism, and it shows the monotheistic character of Protestantism. Catholicism, having inherited polytheistic ideas from Paganism, naturally recognizes the value of man's good works. In the saints whom he worships the Catholic sees beings who, though they were once fallible like himself, have yet obtained heavenly authority ; and, as he is thus conscious of no important difference between his divinities and himself, he is not disposed to underestimate the worth of his virtue.

As a necessary consequence of its distinctive doctrine, Protestantism is characterized by humility. It depresses human excellence and heightens the sense of sin. In this it develops what were, as we saw before, the essential tendencies of Judaism. And, curiously enough, the phenomenon which appeared in Judaism—*theological humility more than counterbalanced by exclusive pride*—appears also in the extreme forms of Protestantism. The religion of the Puritans was ultra-Protestant in its insistence on the utter sinfulness of human nature and the need of faith ; and yet no class of men were ever prouder than they. Like the Jews, they felt their pride as the people, the elect of God, who

were honoured by him above the rest of mankind. The same phenomenon can be observed at the present day among the extreme Evangelical sects which keep the far frontier of Protestantism. In them we also find theoretically religious humility, and practically the most intense religious pride. And, indeed, both in these sects and in Puritanism we see Protestantism fully developed in its likeness to its parent Judaism, with the harshness and exclusiveness of Judaism thinly veiled under a nominal Christianity.

Again, Protestantism resembles Judaism in its higher morality. Protestants as a whole are certainly more moral than Catholics as a whole. At first sight this seems remarkable, as morality is not encouraged by the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone. But, as a matter of fact, the priestly absolution of Catholicism is a much more immoral doctrine. In practice, as might be expected, the belief in justification by faith alone does less mischief than the belief that sins can be got rid of by a visit to the nearest church. Of course, in addition to this, the higher theology of Protestantism favours morality, just as the higher theology of Judaism did. So far as it is purer and more rational than Catholicism, it naturally is more moral, and allies itself less easily with ignorance and animalism.

Protestantism, too, is like Judaism in having for

its basis a written revelation. The Bible is to Protestants what the law and the prophets were to Jews. This feature of Protestantism is obviously connected with its depreciation of human excellence. It makes men simply vessels for the reception of a finished system of religious truth. Catholicism, on the other hand, by its assertion of a continuously inspired Church, which in every generation may develop new dogmas, plainly assigns a higher position in religion to man.

As regards simplicity of thought and worship, there is clearly the same opposition between Protestantism and Catholicism that there was between Judaism and Paganism. Catholicism is remarkable more than Protestantism for complexity of doctrine and sensuousness in worship. We will now consider how far this opposition shows itself in their treatment of the great dogmas which nominally are common to them both.

The Atonement being the chief Jewish dogma of Christianity, we should expect it to be more prominent in Protestantism than in Catholicism. And this is strictly the case. Catholicism lays no stress on the doctrine. In a very able work by Mr. S. Baring-Gould, which presents the religion of Catholicism in its truest form, the Atonement is made simply symbolical, and the death of Christ is regarded as hardly necessary to his work.¹ Protes-

¹ "The Origin and Development of Religious Belief," ii. 307 *seq.*

tantism, on the other hand, makes the Atonement its primary dogma. "The blood of Jesus," is its central cry. It links the dogma with its distinctive doctrine; justification by faith in the reconciling death of Christ is the essence of its theology, and sums up its multitudinous preaching.

We also find the great Pagan dogma of Christianity, the Incarnation, more prominent in Catholicism than in Protestantism. That God became man is the central assertion of Catholicism, on which it bases its higher estimation of human dignity. This can plainly be seen in the work last referred to, where the Incarnation is regarded as the condition of theistic religion.¹ But it is still more evident in the tendency of Catholic theology to exalt the divinity at the expense of the humanity of Christ, for manifestly the doctrine of the Incarnation is expanded and made more important in proportion as the difference between it and the original Jewish belief in the simple humanity of Christ is increased. The Athanasian Creed is thoroughly Catholic, and its definition of the nature of Christ involves the destruction of his human personality. Catholic theologians have boldly adopted this conclusion, and assert that his personality is wholly divine.² Instinctively the Catholic always thinks of Christ as God.

¹ "The Origin and Development of Religious Belief," vol. ii. ch. 7.

² See Liddon's "Bampton Lectures," p. 259 *seq.*, 7th edit.

Protestantism, on the contrary, never dwells on the Incarnation. The extreme Evangelical sects, in which its principles are fully developed, are perpetually drifting towards Unitarianism. But, as in the case of Catholicism, its interpretation of the doctrine best reveals its tendencies. It exalts the humanity at the expense of the divinity of Christ. It holds him up as an example in a manner which implies his human personality. Instinctively the Protestant always thinks of Christ as man.

In their treatment of the Eucharist the respective characteristics of Catholicism and Protestantism are also evident. We have already seen the Paganism of the Catholic doctrine of the real presence. Equally the two Protestant doctrines show the influence of Judaism on Christianity. The first, the Evangelical doctrine, which allows the Eucharist no sacramental value, and makes it simply a commemoration of the sacrament which accompanied the sacrifice of Christ's death, was probably the belief of the Jewish Church at its very beginning ; the second, and more general one, which asserts the real presence, but only in a spiritual sense through the faith of the communicant, we know to have been the belief of the later Jewish Church in the time of St. Paul. If it were not for the pressure of Catholicism, it is likely that the second would be the doctrine of all forms of

Protestantism. But when Catholics have so exaggerated the real presence, Protestants, by a natural reaction, are tempted to deny it altogether.

Thus the two systems of religion which Christianity seemed to unite have plainly parted again. The Judaism in which it was born, and the Paganism in which it reached its maturity, stand once more side by side. And not merely does Christianity reveal so manifestly that great opposing forces met in its history, but in reality every important feature of the long course of development which has been the subject of our survey, is recorded as clearly in its present structure as the chief conditions of the past evolution which has produced it are recorded in the structure of an animal organism.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PERMANENCE OF DOGMATIC RELIGION.

IN the course of our inquiry, one fact has been made strikingly manifest, namely, the persistence of religious ideas. We found that Christianity at its beginning was only the result of a tendency long latent in Judaism, that its doctrines were wholly Jewish while its adherents were chiefly Jews, and that afterwards, when Pagans in large numbers entered the Church, they carried with them and made Christian the principles of their Pagan religions. Similarly we saw that no new religion was created by the Reformation, that it was merely an instance of reversion, of the falling back of part of Christianity to an older type. In fact, from our study of this subject, we might conclude that religious ideas are practically indestructible, or, at least, that they can only be modified by gradual processes working during long periods of time.

This conclusion would be unquestionably correct,

and it especially needs to be insisted on at the present moment. A conviction is general among enlightened men that we are on the threshold of a great religious revolution, which is to be effected by the speedy destruction of Christianity and the consequent abolition of supernatural religion. There seems to be some reason for this belief. Within the last half-century Christianity has declined considerably. Thought and culture have broken loose from it. Fifty years ago the vast majority of the men of letters and science of Europe professed some form of it ; now only a small minority do so, and even this minority is steadily growing smaller. We might predict with almost absolute certainty that fifty years hence hardly a single believer in dogmatic Christianity will be found among the leading men of European literature and science. Christianity is dying at the top.

There is a certain resemblance between this state of things and the condition of the Roman world at the time Christianity was beginning to conquer it. Pagan religions then were dying at the top. Philosophers despised them and wits laughed at them ; the thought of the age was as completely agnostic as the thought of our own day is tending to become. A thinker, studying the phenomena of the period, might then have reasonably concluded that supernatural religion was destined speedily to perish, that, as men of

learning had abandoned it, after a short time their views would spread downwards, and be adopted by all classes of the people. How exquisitely this conclusion would have been exposed by the irony of history! Ten centuries later the religious ideas then current among the populace were common to every class, and the descendants and representatives of the philosophers who rejected supernaturalism were employing their philosophical powers in determining exactly the nature of angels. Perhaps the future is preparing a similar exposure for the philosophers of our own day, who are confident that supernatural religion will soon be a curiosity of the past. A few centuries hence, if esoteric Buddhism shall take the place of Christianity, perhaps philosophy will be engaged in explaining the meaning of "karma," and science will be occupied in ascertaining the exact nature of an astral body.

Supernaturalism has just as much vitality now as it had a century after Christ. Even if within the next few hundred years Christianity were to become wholly extinct, the ideas underlying it would simply be transferred to some other form of dogmatic religion. The decline of Christianity now, like the decline of the Paganism of the Roman empire, so far as it is real, is the prelude to the formation of new religions. If the support to which the religious ideas of a generation have

attached themselves is overthrown, they soon find another system to sustain them. The fall of an old religion is the signal for the rise of a new.

Signs of this transfer of religious allegiance are distinctly visible at present. There is the same mixture of credulity and scepticism now that there was in the first century of the Christian era. We, too, have a philosophical class intensely sceptical, but we also have a class of people who are eager votaries of new religions and excessively credulous. The credulity of the many is the consequence of the scepticism of the few, and is the mark of religious change. It now characterizes those whose faith in Christianity is shaken, but in whom religious ideas are as strong as ever.

The religious ideas now embodied in Christianity and stamped on the general mass of mankind come under the head of dogmatic supernaturalism ; they are most of them concerned with God, personal immortality, heaven, and hell. This dogmatic supernaturalism began with the earliest illusions which created religion thousands of years ago. Since then, with every step of his upward progress, man has been more and more the slave of religious dogma. The higher religions of historical times have multiplied assertions about unknown phenomena ; Christianity, the highest of religions, has done so most of all. Having inherited, then, this vast inheritance of belief in

supernatural dogma, which began to accumulate in the remotest ages, and has since been enlarged and made sure by the great religion which for fifteen hundred years has been identified with the main civilization of the world, how can men of our own day lightly shake off supernaturalism ! A few here and there, as variations from the general type necessarily limited in number, may manage to put it aside after a severe contest with the irrational instincts which they have inherited. But so far as the mass of mankind are concerned, ages must elapse before the work of ages can be undone.

Just as in the first century the disbelief of philosophers had discredited the Pagan religions, so now the disbelief of men of thought is discrediting Christianity. And as a certain class of Pagans then turned from the discredited religions to find another basis for their religious ideas, so now a certain class of people are seeking a basis for their religious ideas apparently surer than discredited Christianity. There is a difference of degree between the two periods ; Christianity is not yet as much discredited as the Pagan religions were when it attacked them. We have not yet reached the condition of the time when the mysteries were the last props of Paganism, and the importation of foreign religions was one of the recognized industries of Rome. But the seeds

of the development of such phenomena are plainly visible. Spiritualism and the Psychological Research Society are the rudiments of Christian mysteries, and certainly attempts on a small scale are being made to import religions into London from Syria and India.

Here in England between the large class of those who still believe in Christianity and the small class of those who put the supernatural wholly aside lies the class, continually increasing in numbers, of those who have lost faith in Christianity, but have not lost faith in the ideas which form the essence of it. Books like "Esoteric Buddhism" and Mr. Laurance Oliphant's "Sympneumata" are written for and by members of this class. The absurd weakness of such attempts to give the supernatural a natural basis does not in the least detract from their popular power.

Life is full of inevitable illusions, and only a few are in a position to detect their illusive character. In regard to these illusions, the belief of the great majority of mankind must be determined by authority; they can only choose between alternative authorities. And their choice cannot rest on strong grounds of personal conviction. The class of people just mentioned, for instance, who have lost faith in Christianity, for the most part could give but poor reasons for their refusal to accept its dogmas. They simply feel that it is dis-

credited, and they do not like to be on the losing side. Any system which embodies their religious ideas, and does not appear to be discredited, they will believe in readily, even though it has not a particle of evidence to support it.

Moreover, when men in general have to choose between authorities whose real weight they are not in a position to determine, their wishes naturally affect their choice. If one alternative is pleasanter than the other, they are sure to decide in its favour. Take, for instance, the belief in personal immortality. This rests on an illusion which can be seen through only by the exercise of a certain amount of philosophical imagination, namely, the impossibility of conceiving its own extinction inherent in the mind's consciousness of life. As every one wishes to be immortal, that is, shrinks from the return to his pre-natal non-existence; and as nearly every one, besides, has lost some loved relative or friend whose death he cannot bear to think of as a final effacement, most people are quite ready to accept this illusion as valid evidence of the truth of the belief. Thus a religious system which asserts the immortality of the soul so far has mankind on its side. And the long influence of Christianity, which from the beginning has been built on the doctrine of personal immortality, has of course co-operated with its primary attractiveness in stamping it deeply on the nature of men of our